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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

QUEBEC INTERESTS

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers deserve members of Parliament who are wholly dedicated to Quebec's interests, and it is obvious they cannot count on the Liberal Party of Canada.

Never has Quebec taken such a backseat as under this government. The latest budget makes that clearer than ever. Quebec wants Ottawa to take action against people who use tax havens, but there is nothing about that in the budget. Quebec wants its fair share of shipbuilding contracts, but there is nothing about that in the budget. Quebec wants the government to stop giving Netflix special treatment, but Ottawa says nothing will change for five years. Quebec wants to dedicate significant resources to transportation electrification, but Ottawa is not doing a thing about that. This government is all for mind-boggling deficits but has no plans to boost health transfers.

This budget is not good for Quebecers. Nevertheless, our constituents deserve representatives who will always stand up for them. They may not be able to count on this government, but they can count on us.

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[English]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week students at Regency Acres Public School attended a fabulous conference focused on science,

technology, engineering, arts, and math. From learning how to code with JavaScript, to using microscopes to explore DNA structures, to designing inventive prototypes and programming robots, grades 4-8 students participated in a full-day workshop to imagine and discover the wondrous possibilities of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Students also heard from Natalie Panek, from MDA's robotics and automation division, who is working on Canadian space robotics programs and the current Mars rover. She is a strong example of a Canadian woman who is leading in engineering and inspiring the next generation of female game changers.

Many thanks to Ms. Morrison-Claus, who organized the STEAM conference, and thanks to all who participated for supporting our youth as they engage in innovation and discovery to position Canada for success in the future.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was budget day and the finance minister could call his new budget the Britney Spears budget: *oops!... I did it again.*

Once again, he tabled a huge deficit, and once again, he broke the Liberals' key election promise on deficits. In the budget, the minister is flip-flopping haplessly as he tries to fumble his way out of the mess he created last summer with his attack on small businesses. There is nothing in the budget to get energy resources to market, nothing to stem the flight of capital from Canada, nothing that will bring back lost energy jobs in Calgary, and nothing that will restore investor confidence in Canada, just \$18 billion more stolen from our children's futures.

Between the broken promises, his attack on small business, his continuing ethical scandals, and his refusal to answer the basic question of when the budget will be balanced, which is the material question about a key election promise, it is time for a new finance minister before this one can hit us one more time.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

ALFRED LAFFERTY

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Black History Month comes to a close, I rise in this place to speak about the memory of Alfred M. Lafferty. In 1856, Mr. Lafferty was accepted at Trinity College, University of Toronto. In 1872, he was appointed Head Master of the Guelph High School, now the GCVI, becoming the first public school headmaster of black descent in Ontario.

A decade before, Guelph was the final stop for blacks fleeing slavery in the south using the Underground Railroad. Mr. Lafferty's appointment in 1872 was at a time when the United States was looking at military reconstruction in the American south to attempt to force reconciliation, but peaceful progress proved far more effective and enduring, thanks to trailblazers like Alfred Lafferty.

We must embrace our diversity to complete the unfinished work left behind by Mr. Lafferty and other leaders in the movement to achieve true equality.

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[Translation]

FRONT-LINE ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, front-line organizations do so much to support our communities that it is hard to imagine how we could manage without them.

Maplegate House for Women, a women's shelter in Elliot Lake, is a vital resource for the most vulnerable people in the region, and it has ambitious plans to do even more.

[English]

In addition to running an emergency shelter for abused women and their children, Maplegate is adding a transitional house for women and a new men's shelter for the community. On top of that, it actively engages people in the area so that everyone has the opportunity to help their neighbours in need. That was the case last weekend, when volunteers, sponsors, and organizers hosted a Coldest Night of the Year walk for homelessness. Billed as family-oriented and fun, the Elliot Lake event raised \$24,000 to help Maplegate serve the most vulnerable in our society.

I encourage all members to join me in thanking organizations like Maplegate, which make our communities more compassionate and caring places to live.

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THE BUDGET

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak about how this government, as in the previous two budgets, is continuing to help northerners thrive. Budget 2018 will provide \$20 million per year and ongoing to the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, better known as CanNor, to continue its important economic development programming.

Making CanNor permanent is a huge step forward, as for years the program has been temporary, with no indication, until the tabling of

the budget, that it would be renewed. As well, of \$511 million allocated across the regional development agencies, \$3 million over five years is being allocated to CanNor to support the innovation and skills plan, \$1 million of which is earmarked specifically to support women entrepreneurs in the north.

We are also excited that the mineral exploration tax credit has been extended for another year. This is instrumental to the north's mining industry.

I thank the Minister of Finance for another great budget for the north.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Liberal budget was not good news for Saskatchewan families, farmers, and business owners.

Where was the support for our grain farmers, who right now are unable to get their grain to market because of issues with the railways? Where was the support for small businesses, which are facing uncertain tax changes while losing competitiveness in the North American market? Where was the support for our families, whose children will be forced to pay down an additional \$18 billion the Liberals are adding to the deficit, with no plan to return to balanced budgets?

Yesterday's Liberal budget left Saskatchewan behind, while today my province is facing losing \$62 million in federal funding for refusing to be bullied into joining the Liberals' carbon tax scheme. Saskatchewan deserves better. Canadians deserve better than the Liberal government.

* * *

RARE DISEASE DAY

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 28 marks Rare Disease Day. While individually these diseases may be rare, collectively they represent over 7,000 different diseases. That sobering statistic is complicated by the fact that they have common issues: medical professionals lack familiarity; diagnostic times are much longer, if diagnosed at all; and many have no treatments or cures.

●(1415)

[Translation]

Fortunately, there is hope. Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada has invested \$142 million over the past five years to support research projects across the country and abroad in order to improve understanding and develop treatments.

[English]

Today I would like to acknowledge the courage of all persons affected and their caregivers, especially like my constituent, Ms. Joanne Paquette, who suffers from Ollier disease, which affects one in 100,000 people.

[Translation]

I invite parliamentarians to applaud the courage and determination of people with rare diseases.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2018 demonstrates that our government remains committed to helping seniors live happy, healthy, and independent lives. Budget 2018 proposes to provide \$75 million in 2018-19 through the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the healthy seniors project in New Brunswick.

Our government's commitment to engaging with communities throughout the Atlantic to develop policies and proposals that serve the interests of Atlantic Canadians remains a key focus. The healthy seniors project will support a range of research initiatives to examine how governments can better support seniors in their homes, communities, and care facilities.

Projects such as this will help our government better understand how care for seniors is delivered across Canada. This innovative approach demonstrates the importance of collaboration with our various partners and the incredible value of continuing to share learning and best practices for the benefit of all Canadian seniors.

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CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in December, the Prime Minister decided to force a values test for organizations applying for Canada summer jobs funding. There are thousands of organizations that will not be receiving funding this year because of their faith, but the loss to Canadians is not about these organizations. It is about the students who serve in soup kitchens, work at street centres, are camp councillors in government projects, like the one I grew up in, and provide health services to seniors the government does not provide. It is about the thousands of at-risk Canadians they serve. It is about feeding the homeless through places like the Toronto City Mission, supporting mental health in shelters, ensuring that underprivileged children have access to summer camps, and ensuring that seniors below the poverty line are receiving necessary health services.

When the Liberal values test wins, marginalized Canadians lose.

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CANADIAN FORCES LEGAL BRANCH

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Armed Forces legal branch celebrates its 100th anniversary and a century of loyal service to Canada.

[Translation]

Today, the Office of the Judge Advocate General has roughly 250 legal officers in the regular forces and the reserve who are deployed to many locations throughout Canada and the world. These legal services have directly contributed to the success of Canadian military operations both at home and abroad, while helping maintain a

Statements by Members

disciplined and highly professional Canadian Armed Forces, acting in accordance with the rule of law.

[English]

The motto of the legal branch is *fiat justitia*, or “let justice prevail”. Over the course of 100 years, the women and men of the legal branch have proudly embraced this motto with the dedication, perseverance, and professionalism that define the Canadian Forces. I wish them the very best as we celebrate this important milestone with them. I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking them for their outstanding efforts in the service of Canada.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the last official day of Black History Month in 2018, and what a month it has been. From the member of Parliament for Whitby's passionate #ISeeYou movement to the Prime Minister's historic recognition of the existence of anti-black racism, from Canada's adoption of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent to the hundreds of Black History Month events held in communities across our great country, this has been an outstanding Black History Month.

[Translation]

However, yesterday was the cherry on top, with a \$23-million allocation for supporting a new approach to multiculturalism and combatting all forms of racism, and \$19 million for issues affecting black communities in Canada, such as mental health, administration of justice, and the disaggregation of data.

[English]

There is more to be done. The road to full equality may be long, but in 2018 it just got shorter.

* * *

● (1420)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the left paint Canada's indigenous people with a broad brush, implying they all oppose responsible natural resource development. That is wrong and it limits their futures and all of Canada's. The Liberals' exclusion of first nations who disagree with them robs them of billions in opportunities, social benefits, and jobs.

Statements by Members

The Liberals' veto of the 31 indigenous equity partnerships for northern gateway and their unilateral drilling and tanker bans hurt indigenous communities. The Liberals ignore pro-natural resource indigenous voices. The Nunavut and Northwest Territories premiers said the drilling ban is a step backward, takes away hope, and forces northern indigenous people to just live on handouts.

The Liberals' delay of the Pacific NorthWest LNG blocked 13 indigenous equity partners from becoming among the wealthiest in Canada. The tanker ban will kill the indigenous-owned Eagle Spirit Energy pipeline, with 35 indigenous equity partners and approval of all the chiefs on the route from Bruderheim to Grassy Point. I urge the Liberals to withdraw the tanker ban and actually listen to the majority of Canada's indigenous people.

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SQUAMISH MEN'S SHED

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new horizons for seniors program works with local organizations to support seniors to volunteer, to participate, and to raise our awareness of seniors' issues. The Squamish Men's Shed is one of these organizations. It has created a communal space to help with isolation for men by bringing them together in a safe workshop with high-quality tools. What could be better than that?

Last week, I met Ernie, David, Dennis, and Mike over coffee. Everything they make is for the community, from cut-outs of birds and fish for children and a bat condo for the watershed society to a library book box, and for the hospice society, a blackboard for a “before I die” bucket list. These men are having fun. They love getting together seven days a week.

Yes, people have to be 55 and male to join, and yes, everyone is welcome to wear the T-shirt and support the men of the Squamish Men's Shed in service to one another and the community.

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REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed yesterday with a budget that failed to promise action, with just studies on pharmacare. The NDP has long called for a national pharmacare strategy and I have been calling for much-needed coverage of prescription contraceptives. I was pleased that at our NDP convention, delegates voted for a policy of action that the NDP recommend the immediate creation of a health subsidy to the provinces for free access to menstrual products and contraception for all citizens.

Sadly, the Liberals have missed an opportunity here. Next week, Canada will recognize International Women's Day, and instead of paying lip service to policies like pay equity and pharmacare, would it not be great to see real action? Let us start with access to free prescription contraceptives and menstrual products, remove barriers, and improve reproductive health options for all Canadians. The time to do this is now. All we need is political will.

PINK SHIRT DAY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud and honoured to rise in the House today to support Pink Shirt Day and take a stand against bullying.

Bullying is a very real struggle in the lives of so many of our children. It is more than getting pushed around and called names on the playground. Cyber-bullying is also a growing problem for today's Canadian children. It can expose them to unrelenting abusive behaviour online. By wearing a pink shirt, parents, friends, and parliamentarians can show that we will support those who are bullied to know that they are not alone.

As the shadow minister for families, children, and social development, I urge members to post on their social media feeds #PinkItForward or #PinkShirtPromise to support Pink Shirt Day. Help end bullying and vow to help spread kindness.

* * *

PINK SHIRT DAY

Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friends and many members have commented that I have really bad taste in clothing. Today of all days, Pink Shirt Day, here I am without a pink shirt. Many members also assume that I am colour-blind. In fact, that is true. I am colour-blind. However, most people, fortunately, are not.

In 2007, two teenagers in Cambridge, Nova Scotia, David Shepherd and Travis Price, talked 850 fellow students into wearing pink shirts to school. It was a wonderful, compassionate response to ninth-grader Charles McNeill, a new student at school, who had been bullied for wearing a pink shirt. They started a movement that is now celebrated around the world, a movement to stop bullying by celebrating diversity and promoting positive social relationships. It is a movement about creating a community where all people feel safe, valued, and respected, and helping people feel good about who they are. How wonderfully Canadian.

From Nova Scotia, Canada, to the world, they are modelling compassion and caring, and in full support, I am wearing this wonderful blue or pink or grey-coloured suit.

ORAL QUESTIONS

•(1425)

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1986, I was one of the first officers on the scene of the shooting of Indian minister Sidhu. I helped him and his wife into the ambulance. It is a day I will never forget.

Jaspal Atwal was convicted of attempted murder in that shooting. The victims of terrorism have names, they have faces, and they have families. Why would the Prime Minister ever meet with Jaspal Atwal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question and I thank him for his service, as I do all men and women who serve in uniform to keep our communities and our country safe.

As I have said a number of times, the invitation never should have been extended to this individual. As soon as we found out about it, we rescinded the invitation. The MP responsible for it has apologized, and we will continue to work to stand against violent extremism and terrorism wherever it rears its head around the world.

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister told the House that the conspiracy theory that security officials spun for the media about convicted terrorist Jaspal Atwal was true. Now the Indian government is contradicting him. Either he is lying, or this government is not telling the whole truth.

Which is it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure no one will be surprised to hear that I will continue to defend and believe in our professional, non-partisan public service.

We will always defend the integrity of our public servants, who are doing an exceptional job. Unlike the previous government, we respect the non-partisan nature of the public service, especially those who serve in our national security agencies. In particular, we respect their ability to provide impartial advice to the government, and we know that the actions they take are always in Canada's best interests.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "baseless and unacceptable" is how the Indian government described the Prime Minister's bizarre theory that a convicted terrorist's presence on the trip was somehow the fault of agents working on behalf of the Indian government. Now the Prime Minister's incompetence has severely damaged Canada's relations with the world's largest democracy and an emerging power in Asia.

Will the Prime Minister finally do the right thing and produce some kind of proof of his conspiracy theory?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems these Harper Conservatives never learn. For 10 years they spent their time disrespecting public servants, using them

Oral Questions

for partisan gains, and making sure their political partisan aims were always front and centre in everything they did.

We respect the independence, the professionalism, and the non-partisan nature of our professional public servants. We will always listen to them, follow their advice, and defend the integrity of our Canadian public service.

•(1430)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has never been a government, Liberal or Conservative, that has used a national security official to clean up an embarrassing mess that was self-inflicted by the Prime Minister.

I have a quote I would like to read for the Prime Minister. It is by a senior correspondent who has followed these issues for years. It says, "In 10 years of Harper, never saw a bureaucrat sent out to clean up a mess made by a politician. But it just happened with [the Prime Minister]."

Why is the Prime Minister using independent officials to clean up his mess?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegations and insinuations made by the members opposite are based on their own experience of torquing our professional—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answers. I would encourage members to show respect for this place.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, the Conservatives opposite torqued our public service every chance it could get for partisan advantage, so I can understand they think everyone behaves that way. We do not.

Every day, whether in this case, or in their everyday work, all the non-partisan security agencies do an exceptional job in the service of Canada's national interest, and Canadians can be reassured that beyond the partisan nature of this House, our professional public servants are—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing partisan about this. It was the Prime Minister's trip that turned into a disaster. It was the Prime Minister's Office that mishandled the invitation that went out to a convicted attempted murderer, and then for the first time in history they decided to use an independent public service as a human shield for his terrible news cycle.

If the Prime Minister is so sure about what he is saying, will he confirm that no one in the Prime Minister's Office or in the public service under his control organized the briefing that was provided for the media laying out this allegation?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, governments organize media briefings all the time. It is only the Conservatives opposite, who consistently for 10 years torqued the public service to their own partisan ends, who see anything nefarious in it. Unlike the previous government, we respect in particular the ability of the public service to provide non-partisan advice and support to the government.

All Canadians can be assured that the only interest on which our security agencies focus is the interest of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expected real action from this government, but this budget once again left them feeling underwhelmed.

The government keeps telling us that the economy is doing well, but most of the Canadians we talk to are wondering who exactly is benefiting because they cannot make ends meet.

This budget is timid and does not help Canadians. There are desperate needs that need to be addressed right now, and yet most of the funding will not be allocated until after the next election.

When will this government stop making promises and start taking action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, with budget 2018, we are taking the next steps to improve equality, competitiveness, sustainability, and equity in Canada. Our budget plan will allow us to continue to invest in strengthening and growing the middle class and to lay a stronger foundation for our children's future.

By closing the gender wage gap, supporting shared parenting, and introducing a new entrepreneurship strategy for women, we are also making significant progress toward equality. Canadians can all be very proud of this budget.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Some of it will be done after the next election, Mr. Speaker.

Let us talk about pharmacare for a minute. The Liberal government is making a big deal about setting up an advisory council, but this morning the finance minister said that the government will only be moving toward means-tested pharmacare. To quote him, he said that they are dealing with the people who don't have it. We in the NDP believe that everyone should have access to affordable medication. The time for universal pharmacare is now.

Why is the Prime Minister even bothering with another long consultation, when his finance minister has already spilled the beans on the outcome?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year almost one million Canadians give up food and heat to afford the medicine they need. The high cost of prescription medication means that sometimes sick Canadians must do without.

As part of budget 2018, we are creating an advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, which will recommend options on how best to move forward together on this important issue to ensure that every Canadian has access to the medicine he or she needs. This builds on significant actions over the last two years to make prescription drugs more affordable and accessible.

* * *

● (1435)

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the aftermath of the Prime Minister's botched trip to India, he has actually managed to make things worse by blaming so-called factions in the Indian government for the invitation extended to Jaspal Atwal, a claim that was swiftly denounced by India's foreign affairs ministry as "baseless and unacceptable."

Is the Prime Minister trying to create an international diplomatic crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have full confidence in the work that our national security agencies and professionals do, and we support them in their professional, non-partisan work.

We will continue to respect and support the work that our intelligence agencies do, because that is what Canadians expect of their government, and that is what Canadians expect of all of us.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that the Prime Minister accomplished very little on his eight-day trip in India with a dozen MPs, all at the expense of taxpayers. He could have raised some issues that are important to Canadians, but no, all he managed to do was to create tension with a very important country in the region.

Is this how the Prime Minister wants to put Canada back on the world stage?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we recognize that India's thriving economy presents some significant opportunities to strengthen Canada's middle class.

We secured more than \$1 billion in investments from deals between Canadian and Indian companies, which will help create more than 5,800 quality jobs for Canadians. The investments will stimulate the growth of Canada's economy, will encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, and will increase co-operation.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the theory his national security advisor gave to the media was true, and that rogue members of the Indian government conspired to embarrass Canada. However, the Liberal member for Surrey Centre also took responsibility for the Prime Minister's international embarrassment. He was punished for that yesterday.

How can both of these versions be true?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, we will always defend the integrity of our senior security and intelligence officials and the excellent work that they do.

Unlike the previous government, we will always listen to them and respect them. We respect their ability to provide impartial advice to the government, and we know that everything they do is in the best interests of Canada. All Canadians should be proud of the non-partisan work our security officials do every single day.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is just one problem. Yesterday, the Prime Minister confirmed that the theory put forward by one of his national security advisers was true. He has also said that it was the member for Surrey Centre acting alone that resulted in this embarrassing incident. How can the Prime Minister, at the same time, blame rogue elements in the Indian government and the member for Surrey Centre?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like most Canadians, on this side of the House we respect and appreciate the work done by our professional public service, and particularly in regard to our national security agencies and information agencies. We believe them when they put forward their information and their recommendations to us.

At the same time, the member for Surrey Centre has taken responsibility for his role in the invitation extended to this individual and has apologized.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister actually saying that the member for Surrey Centre has taken sole responsibility for a scheme concocted by the Indian government? Is that the assertion that we are led to believe? How can they both be true? If, on the one hand, it is the Government of India that has implicated itself into Canadian government affairs, that is a profound allegation that has serious consequences that cannot be thought about lightly just to get through a 24-hour news cycle.

Why is the Prime Minister so irresponsible about this very important bilateral issue?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we support and accept the counsel, the recommendations, the extraordinary work, and the advice of our national security agencies and information agencies. We support our professional public services and accept the information and recommendations they give to us.

At the same time, as I have said, the member for Surrey Centre has taken responsibility for having extended the invitation to this individual and has apologized.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody believes that there was a single person in the Prime Minister's Office who was not provided a list of invitees. Nobody believes this ridiculous assertion that the responsibility lies with rogue elements or factions in the Indian government. By having an independent national security official brief the media anonymously right in the middle of a negative 24-hour news cycle, the Prime Minister has implicated the independent public service in his disastrous trip.

Will the Prime Minister confirm or deny that anyone in his office orchestrated the briefing to shift the blame on this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to explain this to the members opposite, who did not learn this through 10 years of government. We saw that regularly in their behaviour in the Harper years.

Professional public servants, particularly those in the national security and information areas, do extraordinary work based on their professional qualifications and based on their analyses. When they make recommendations, or when they make statements to Canadians or to this government, we, on this side of the House, choose to believe them. On that side of the House, who knows?

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister would have us believe that an independent national security officer took it upon himself to brief the media right in the middle of a terrible news cycle that was embarrassing the Prime Minister. If that is not the definition of politicizing national security officials, then I do not know what is. Nobody is believing it.

The Prime Minister needs to learn that there are serious consequences to these types of allegations, that governing is more than just Instagram posts, and that when one makes this kind of allegation, there are consequences.

Will the Prime Minister identify who in his office orchestrated this media briefing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it would be helpful to folks here if the member opposite actually were to state whether or not he believes that the professional public servant, who functions in a non-partisan way, was not telling the truth or was not clear on what he was saying. This is the issue that the member opposite seems to be getting at, that he does not believe our professional public servants in what they tell Canadians. If that is the case, then the member opposite should say so.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister identify who it was who briefed the media? Will the Prime Minister identify, so that we can have confidence in what was said, who in his office orchestrated the media briefing? Will the Prime Minister provide a modicum of proof for these assertions that it was the Indian government that was behind his embarrassing fiasco? I doubt that he will.

Oral Questions

Last year, he met with someone who is the vice-president of a listed terrorist organization. In December, he met with Joshua Boyle, who, days later, was charged with sexual assault and unlawful confinement.

Why is it always that the Prime Minister seems to be identified with these kinds of people?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member opposite is not being clear. He has not come forward to say whether or not he actually believes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We need some order so that we can hear both the questions and the answers. I think a little respect for the House means that we are going to hear both sides, and each side has a chance to respond in due course. Each side should have confidence in the ability of Canadians to judge the quality of both the questions and the answers.

Order. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite do not trust or believe our national security agencies, they should simply come forward and say so.

On this side of the House, we have faith in our professional public servants, particularly in the intelligence and security areas, who do extraordinary work every day to keep Canadians safe, and the members opposite should stop disrespecting them.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they are a feminist government but will not put their money where their mouth is. This was evident in yesterday's budget. Pay equity was promised by the Liberals over 40 years ago, and again in 2016, but now? The Liberals put no money for pay equity in yesterday's budget, making women wait yet again.

Immediate funding is needed now to bridge the funding gap for women in Canada. How much longer will the government make women wait to have equal pay for work of equal value?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years we have taken many different actions to help address the wage gap and support women's labour market participation, including \$7 billion to address early learning and child care needs, increasing parental and maternity benefits, and implementing flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, and yesterday we announced that we would introduce pay equity legislation as part of the budget implementation act.

We know there is much more work to do, and we intend to get it done.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals talk non-stop about being a feminist government but will not put their money where their mouth is.

Once again there is a proposal in the budget for a legislative framework to ensure pay equity, but there is no money to back it up. None. For years, women's groups have been calling for a universal child care system, affordable housing, and shelters for women who are victims of violence. It takes money to implement all these measures.

When will the government put words into action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been putting words into action for the past two years.

We announced \$7 billion to address early learning and child care needs. We announced a total of \$40 billion for a national housing strategy, with 25% going directly to women and families.

We increased parental and maternity benefits, implemented flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, and more. We invested in emergency housing for women in crisis. We will continue to make investments.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. On the one hand, a Liberal MP apologized for inviting a terrorist to attend an event with the Prime Minister in India. On the other, the Prime Minister is insinuating that the Indian government tried to sabotage the trip by inviting the terrorist to India with him.

As anyone would expect, the Indian government reacted strongly to those insinuations by the Prime Minister and his chief adviser.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, he should table his evidence in the House.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have often said, those of us on this side of the House have faith in our security and information services. We have already answered all these questions, but as everyone knows, the opposition would rather talk about anything but budget 2018, which is full of great initiatives for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

One of those initiatives is the Canada workers benefit, which we are enhancing by making it available to another 300,000 low-income workers. The opposition is focused on us, but we are focused on providing the best possible support to Canadians.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we will continue to focus on the Prime Minister, because his performance has been a diplomatic disaster.

Oral Questions

While his national security adviser was suggesting that the Indian government wanted to sabotage the Prime Minister's visit because he was not happy with the media coverage he was getting of his family trip to India, the Prime Minister made some serious accusations. The Indian government has denied all the allegations, calling them baseless and unacceptable. This is all very serious.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, he needs to produce the evidence to support his allegations.

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have answered these questions, but while the opposition chooses to focus on me, we remain focused on Canadians.

We want to do more, across government, to support women. The opposition voted against the idea of making the Minister of Status of Women a full minister, but with budget 2018, we are going even further to ensure that Canada can always view its actions through the lens of gender equality and diversity. We are going to make Status of Women Canada an official department.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the spectacle continues. The Leader of the Opposition asked the question 11 times, and the member for Richmond—Arthabaska asked it twice. I will start over with the time I have left.

First of all, the Prime Minister of Canada confirmed yesterday here in the House that the Indian government was complicit in sending the invitation to Jaspal Atwal. At the same time, the member for Surrey Centre is being thrown under the bus because he is being blamed for issuing the invitation. Which is it?

If the Prime Minister stands behind what he said yesterday, he needs to bring us the evidence.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already answered those questions. What the opposition fails to understand is that it should be focusing on Canadians. That is what Liberal MPs did when Canadians told us that we should do more to help workers in seasonal industries.

We announced the immediate payment of \$10 million in income support for workers, as well as more than \$200 million over the next two years through labour market development agreements. We listened to seasonal workers and we are working to deliver on our promises.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just great. Canadians watching today can see that this Prime Minister does not take anything seriously in Canada.

Yesterday, the theory put forward by the national security advisor was that the Indian government was involved in inviting Jaspal Atwal. However, today, the Indian government, through a foreign affairs press release, confirmed that that was absolutely false and that there was no truth to the claim.

If the Prime Minister is maintaining his position, he should give us the evidence now.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already answered those questions. What we are focusing on is ensuring a better future for Canadians on the labour market. It is unacceptable that a wage gap still exists in 2018. We therefore announced that we are going to introduce new proactive pay equity legislation. By promoting greater equality for women, we could inject \$150 billion into the national economy by 2026. This shows that it is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget delivered yesterday literally leaves Canadians out in the cold and we see the homeless crisis every day in British Columbia. Tens of thousands of Canadians are sleeping out in the parks and main streets of our country and the Prime Minister says to wait until the next election, wait for a few more years, wait until Liberals are good and ready to put adequate funds into housing.

Homeless Canadians have waited two and a half years while the government is focused on loopholes for the super-rich. Why does he not take action? Why do the homeless always finish behind the super-rich for the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, over the past two years we have made significant investments in helping the most vulnerable in our country.

We brought forward the Canada child benefit that is lifting hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty and reducing child poverty by 40%. In this budget we are moving forward with a Canada workers benefit that is going to lift tens of thousands of low-income workers out of poverty. On top of that, we are moving forward with a national housing strategy of \$40 billion overall that is going to go to homelessness, is going to help affordable housing, and help with housing affordability.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should know that the homeless cannot wait for years and years until the Liberals get around to funding housing in this country. It is the same with pharmacare. Liberals tried a big build-up around the budget, but what it turned out to be was yet another Liberal study. For 21 years, all they do is study. If he wants to steal NDP ideas, steal them, but put them into practice. Do not just stare at them; that is weird. After 21 years, the evidence is clear, why does the Prime Minister continue to refuse to implement pharmacare now in Canada?

Oral Questions

● (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to hear the member opposite disparage a national housing strategy because in addition to housing investment from budget 2016, it represents a 12-year commitment to housing. Thirty per cent of that 12-year investment will be spent in the first four years of our mandate. Investment then increases gradually over time because, unlike previous governments, we believe the community housing sector should grow, not sink. That is why we are moving forward on things that matter to Canadians in concrete, tangible ways and delivering on all our promises.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget was a monumental step toward building an equal, competitive, sustainable, and fair Canada where all Canadians can thrive. It was an immense step forward, with a specific chapter dedicated to indigenous peoples in the budget. However, on the path of reconciliation, the Métis Nation has long been forgotten by Canadian governments.

Would the right hon. Prime Minister please update the House as to our government's commitment to reconciliation and inclusion of the Métis Nation in Canada's growth and prosperity?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reflecting commitments in the Canada-Métis Nation Accord, budget 2018 proposes to invest \$516 million over 10 years for housing, post-secondary education, and health strategies. President Chartrand of the Manitoba Métis Federation said, "Since Confederation, the Métis Nation has been left out in the cold. With this announcement, we can begin to see the change." We have brought the Métis Nation back into Canada. These investments in Métis Nation priorities will support their vision of self-determination.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it was revealed that the Prime Minister had brought a convicted terrorist along on his trip, he claimed that it was a backbench MP who had arranged it. Now he claims that it was the Indian government that did it through a conspiracy. Is he alleging that his own backbench MP is part of a conspiracy orchestrated by the Indian government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question.

However, I understand that the opposition members want to keep to this line of questioning because they prefer talking about anything other than budget 2018, which includes so many positive initiatives for the middle class and those working hard to join it. One of these is the Canada workers benefit, which we are not only strengthening but are also making accessible to an additional 300,000 low-income workers.

The opposition will stay focused on us, but we will continue to focus on Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. As I said earlier, members should have confidence in the public to make decisions and assessments about things that are said in this place, the questions and the answers, and the quality thereof. Members ought to understand that the Speaker is not empowered to comment on any of those things. Members should listen.

The hon. member for Carleton.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants to talk about the budget. In what year will it be balanced?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Canadians were given a choice between investment and austerity. Canadians chose investment, and it worked.

Over the last two years, the Canadian economy has created more than half a million jobs. Canada has the best debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 countries, the highest growth of any of the G7 countries, and the lowest unemployment in 40 years.

As is usually the case, Canadians were right in their choice.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is usual, the Prime Minister was wrong in the choice he presented them.

He said that the deficit this year would be \$6 billion; instead, it is \$18 billion, three times bigger. He said that next year the budget would be balanced, and now we learn that it will not be for another quarter of a century, during which time he will add, or some future government will add, a half a trillion dollars in debt, presuming there is no more spending.

Once again, when will the budget be balanced?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Harper government, the Conservatives added \$150 billion to our national debt and had no growth to show for it. The worst growth rates since the Great Depression were under Stephen Harper.

We chose investment. Canadians chose investment in them, in their communities, in their futures, and it is delivering with the highest growth rate in the G7. We have the best record on job creation in a long time, with over half a million jobs created in the past two years, and the lowest unemployment in 40 years.

Canadians made the right choice, not the Conservatives' choice.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question the Prime Minister has inherited great fortune, a strong world economy, and a doubling of oil prices, our American customers south of the border driving up demand, and the government is blowing every penny of it. The deficit is three times what the Liberals promised. The deficit will continue for a quarter century, and amount to almost half a trillion dollars in new debt.

I will ask for a third time, and maybe this time the Prime Minister can answer the question. In what year will the budget be balanced?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Liberals presented a plan for investment instead of the austerity plan the Conservatives were presenting, Canadians supported us because they knew we would invest while maintaining fiscal discipline.

We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, better than the U.S., better than the U.K., better than Germany, and it is decreasing every single year. That is fiscal responsibility. At the same time, we are investing in Canadians, in their communities, in the future that Canadians need. That is the choice Canadians made two years ago, and that is what is delivering for Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two months into its mandate, the government got a Treasury Board memo warning of significant risks with the Phoenix pay system. Obviously the government did not pay attention.

In my riding, too many employees are among the many in the Phoenix ashes. One is still waiting for \$40,000 in severance pay. It has been two years. Our workers do not deserve this financial and emotional stress. They deserve to get paid for work done. It is simple. When will the government pay its workers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this ongoing situation is unacceptable, and people doing work for the federal government, or anyone, deserve to get paid. We did not create this mess, but we will fix it. We are committed to doing whatever it takes to fix it.

In budget 2018, we announced an investment of over \$430 million over six years to continue addressing existing pay challenges. We will increase the number of employees working on pay issues, and hire more HR advisers within departments to assist employees with payroll issues. We have a plan to stabilize the pay system that we will continue executing, while working with experts, unions—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we hope that it will not take 10 years for the plan to be implemented. Two years ago, the Liberal government made the bad decision to implement the Phoenix pay system even though it knew about the extent of the problems it would create. The Liberals ignored the concerns of the Treasury Board and senior officials, and the example of Australia, which was well documented. The government's bad decision and poor management needlessly created thousands of victims.

Will the government compensate affected employees for all the harm they have suffered?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to do what is necessary to fix the problem. We announced more than \$430 million over six years to continue addressing existing pay problems. We will increase the number of employees working on pay issues and hire more HR advisers within departments. We have a plan to stabilize the pay system. We will also work with experts, unions, and technology providers in anticipation of a new pay system.

* * *

● (1505)

[*English*]

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps contradicting himself, yet Canadians deserve a sincere response from him.

Yesterday he fired the MP for Surrey Centre as the B.C. caucus chair. Today he said that the person was personally responsible for inviting Mr. Atwal. Yesterday he also said that he supported his national security adviser's contention that the Indian government was responsible for the Atwal scandal.

Both things cannot be true, Mr. Prime Minister. Which one is true?

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member for Durham to direct his comments to the Chair.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered those questions.

What the opposition does not understand is that it should be focusing on Canadians. That is what Liberal MPs did when they told us we needed to help workers in seasonal industries. We listened, and we are delivering.

For those working in seasonal industries, we announced \$10 million in immediate income support, and over \$200 million over the next two years through federal-provincial labour market development agreements.

This is what we can accomplish when we focus on the middle class and people working hard to join it.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it disrespects Canadians for the Prime Minister to not even answer questions on the India trip, so I will ask for a specific aspect of that trip.

Oral Questions

On February 22, the national security adviser and his counterpart in India signed a co-operation agreement on countering violent extremism. The next day the Prime Minister's Office forced that adviser to blame the Indian government for Canadian extremism.

My question on the trip is this. How is that co-operation agreement with India going?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is troubling to hear how much the members opposite do not trust or believe in the professionalism and non-partisan nature of our public service. Our professional public servants, particularly in the security and information areas, work very hard to keep Canadians safe. To hear members opposite trying to score cheap political points by politicizing them is really disappointing.

We take the responsibility of working with partners around the world very seriously to keep Canadians safe, and that is what we will continue to do.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is sullyng the reputation of one of those fine public servants.

I will use an example from 2010, when CSIS suggested foreign agents were at play in Canada. The MP for Ajax, now the parliamentary secretary for public safety, said at the time that it was wrong for a cloud to be hanging over the head of an entire community. Well, now the Prime Minister's actions and those of his office are hanging a cloud over one of the biggest countries in the world and our friends in India.

Will the Prime Minister finally table one shred of truth to this crazy India conspiracy theory?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and India have a long tradition of bilateral relations, built on the traditions of democracy, pluralism, and strong people-to-people ties. Indo Canadians, including those of the Sikh faith, have made immense contributions to Canada.

We believe that freedom of speech and expression are at the core of democracy, both at home in Canada and around the world. These rights are universal. We will work and collaborate with people all around the world to advance those rights.

On this side of the House we take that very seriously.

* * *

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, achieving gender equality is the smart thing to do to grow the economy. Over the past 40 years, the rising number of women participating in the workforce has accounted for about a third of Canada's economic growth. However, there are still barriers that prevent women from achieving their full potential. Our government has committed to making gender equality the focus of its decisions.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House how budget 2018 will meet that commitment and enable more women to take advantage of the opportunities they deserve?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Shefford for his question. We know that the middle class cannot grow without the full involvement of women in the labour market. We announced an apprenticeship incentive grant for women. This five-year pilot project will provide a maximum of \$6,000 over two years to women who choose a male-dominated Red Seal trade. Through measures like this, we will continue to move forward, help women, and grow our economy.

* * *

• (1510)
[*English*]

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know it, here are the facts.

Daniel Jean, on his own, called together the members of the press gallery travelling with the Prime Minister in India to tell them that it was factions within the Indian government that were sabotaging the Prime Minister's trip. The Prime Minister has told us that he believes Daniel Jean.

We heard today that the India high commissioner has communicated publicly that the Indian government refutes this, and also says that these accusations are baseless and not appropriate.

The question is this. It seems that the ball is in Canada's court. What is Canada's diplomatic response to this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand and defend the integrity of our public servants who accomplish incredible work. Canadians rejected the Conservatives' approach of disrespecting and bashing the hard-working men and women of our non-partisan public service.

Since the member opposite has used the name of Daniel Jean, it is important to remind them all that Daniel is a distinguished public servant who has served governments, regardless of their political stripe, for over 35 years. In fact, I remind the member opposite that the previous Conservative government so valued Mr. Jean's service that it chose him to represent Canada when he addressed the UN General Assembly—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one day after the federal budget, Quebec remains unsatisfied. Although expectations were high, Quebec got only crumbs. The budget offered no details on phase two of infrastructure projects like Montreal's blue line, had nothing for Davie shipyard in Quebec City, and, most importantly, it had nothing about taxing web giants like Netflix. They are doing nothing. Despite strong grassroots support, there are no measures for fighting tax evasion or the tax havens robbing us of billions of dollars.

What use are the Liberal members from Quebec if they cannot keep their promises to Quebecers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, with our investments in the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit, and our national housing strategy, we are keeping our promises in Quebec and across the country. As for tax evasion, we invested over \$1 billion within the first two years, and there are now more than 1,000 offshore audits and more than 40 criminal investigations with links to offshore transactions under way. To date, we have imposed \$44 million in penalties on individuals promoting tax avoidance schemes, and yesterday we announced more than \$90 million over five years—

The Speaker: I will now recognize the hon. member for Don Valley East.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new EI parental sharing benefit represents a major step forward in helping parents balance work and parental responsibilities, as they welcome new children into their family.

Could the Prime Minister explain how this greater choice and flexibility in parental and maternity benefits will help parents provide their children with the best possible start in life?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, too often working mothers pull double duty, working a full-time job during the day, then going home and doing the bulk of parenting duties at night. Moving away from this second shift will take time, and it begins by helping parents share the work of raising their children more equally with the new parental sharing benefit.

Greater gender equality is the smart thing to do for the economy and the right thing to do for Canadians.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we woke up today to headlines from around Canada. “[The Prime Minister] stands by official who suggested Indian factions sabotaged trip.” “PM doesn't refute 'conspiracy theory' that Indian government factions sabotaged his trip.” In response, India has said that the assertion is baseless and unacceptable.

The Prime Minister leads a G7 nation. This is a diplomatic matter. What will he say to the high commissioner to Canada from India in response to its missive?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to think it is a problem that the headline is “Prime Minister stands by his officials”. This is something that we need to understand.

On this side of the House our government will always stand by the professional public servants who work hard, regardless of the government stripe of the day, to serve Canadians, to keep Canadians safe, and to give us the information and the understanding of the world that we need to have.

Points of Order

We will always stand by our non-partisan professional public service. It is a shame that they do not.

* * *

●(1515)

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the budget for the 800 Davie workers who are out of a job, but a government that runs an \$18-billion deficit can hardly plead austerity. This is a political choice, and the government can take action if it wants to. It is even giving up revenue by protecting tax havens for the super-rich and allowing Internet giants to avoid collecting taxes.

Why is the Prime Minister working harder for tax havens than for Quebecers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Davie shipyard, we know what great work Davie workers have been doing for a long time. That is why we are happy to be in talks for the new icebreakers the Canadian Coast Guard needs.

With respect to Internet giants, we will not make taxpayers pay more tax no matter what the opposition wants. We will keep making sure that we are helping middle-class Quebecers and Canadians because that is what we said we would do. That was our election promise to Canadians.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Michael Creed, Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine of Ireland.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

GUESTS IN THE GALLERY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to inform the Speaker of the House of an incident that occurred yesterday when the budget was tabled in the House by the Minister of Finance.

The House of Commons is not an instrument of government. The House of Commons is not a place where the Minister of Finance has permission to control who has or does not have the right to be present in this place.

Private Members' Business

A guest from my riding wanted to be present when the Minister of Finance made his presentation and opposition members subsequently made their statements. She therefore requested an access card in order to attend the budget presentation. She was very surprised to learn that all seats, including those reserved for opposition members, had been reserved by the Minister of Finance. I still asked her to attend, in case a seat became available.

Mr. Speaker, you and I noted that there were many seats available in all the galleries yesterday, so I told my guest to come and attend the budget presentation.

To her astonishment, the finance department official denied her access to the House and would not give her an access card. My guest is the manager of my constituency office. She came all this way to attend the budget presentation. She has an ID card that allows her to move about on the Hill. She then went to the Parliamentary Protective Service and asked them to let her in. However, they had orders not to admit anyone without a pass from the Department of Finance. She then went back to the rotunda and reminded the finance department official that there were seats available, but she still denied her access to the House.

My guest then sent me a text message to inform me that she was unable to attend. I had to leave the House and miss several minutes of the finance minister's speech to go meet my employee and accompany her to the gallery, where she was finally able to see the presentation.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable.

[English]

Members will recall that last year, on budget day, there were two incidents. The first one involved the distribution of the budget documents. The documents were distributed before the Minister of Finance rose in the House to present the budget, and even more offensive was the fact that the documents were distributed to Liberal members only. The second matter involved the vote that preceded the budget presentation. The members for Milton and Beauce were prevented from attending that vote because security was holding the buses that carry members to the House on account of empty cars from the Prime Minister's motorcade.

Mr. Speaker, both of those cases and the case before you today have involved the interference of the executive branch with the administrative responsibilities of the House. It is your duty, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the Department of Finance gets out of our way and allows us to control our own affairs. You, Mr. Speaker, are responsible for the distribution of documents in the House, access to the House, and access to the galleries, not the Department of Finance.

Last year, the matter of access to the House was settled through a question of privilege, and the distribution of documents was dealt with by you personally, Mr. Speaker. I am asking you to intervene again this year and to once again rein in the executive branch. This place belongs to us, not them.

Speaker Fraser summed it up this way when he was faced with the behaviour of the Department of Finance in 1989. He said, on October 10, 1989:

I expect the Department of Finance...to study this ruling carefully and remind everyone within the Public Service that we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy nor a so-called administrative democracy.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to address the disrespect shown to this member by members of the government while he was talking about this.

This is the House of Commons, where we are all equal. This House belongs to all of us. It does not belong to the government. When the government tries to control how the public can access the galleries, that is not the job of anyone in the executive branch. It is not the job of the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, we look to you. It is your job to protect our rights and privileges to ensure that there is equal access for every member of Parliament, our staff, and the public we invite. We would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take this very seriously. This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue for all members of Parliament, despite what these Liberals are saying right now, when it does not matter if it does not affect them. This affects all members of Parliament. We look to you to protect our rights and privileges, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for raising these important issues in the House of Commons. It is very frustrating, and quite alarming, to see the members of the government laughing about such an important issue. I would like to take the opportunity to confer with my colleagues and bring back concerns we would have on the same point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I share my opposition colleagues' opinion, so I will join the debate. I agree that it is not right for the government to start controlling access to the gallery. I would also like to add that my constituency office received requests to reserve seats in the gallery on budget day, but we were turned down. I felt exactly the same frustration as my colleague who spoke earlier when I saw the empty seats yesterday. I want to thank him for his point of order, and I fully support his efforts.

• (1525)

[English]

The Speaker: Order. I thank the hon. members who have raised this matter and commented on it. I gather that some members will have more comments later. In the meantime, I will be looking into the matter. I also encourage members to read in detail my ruling on a similar issue that arose last year, including the details of the findings at that time.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

The House resumed from February 15 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:24 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, February 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 147, under private members' business.

Call in the members.

[*And the bells having rung:*]

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to the House*]

● (1530)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 456*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseauit	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Garrison	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Johns	Julian
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pollièvre	Quach
Raitt	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Stetski

Stewart
Stubbs
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 125

Private Members' Business

Strahl
Sweet
Tootoo
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Bratina	Breton
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Marcil	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	Monsef
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Paupé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petipas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota

Business of Supply

Rudd
Rusnak
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tan
Thériault
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young — 167

Ruimy
Sajjan
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Yip

Harder
Hughes
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nantel
Nuttall
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Raitt
Rayes
Richards
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 135

Hoback
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Lake
Laverdière
Lloyd
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Rankin
Reid
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Shiple
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Tootoo
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1535)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Monday, February 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Jonquière relating to the business of supply.

● (1540)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 457)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultouf
Albrecht
Angus
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bernier
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Cannings
Carrie
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Gladu
Gourde

Albas
Anderson
Arnold
Barlow
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Calkins
Caron
Chong
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)
Finley
Gallant
Gill
Godin
Hardcastle

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Ayoub
Bagnell
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhillon
Drouin
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gameau
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hardie
Hébert
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jordan
Kang
Khera

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Amos
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Grewal
Harvey
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Khalid
Lambropoulos

Lametti	Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mencino
Mihychuk (Soeurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sajjan
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Sorbara	Spengemann
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Trudeau
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
Young — 159	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1545)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th and 13th reports of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

The 12th report is entitled “Towards Privacy by Design: Review of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act”, or PIPEDA. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

The 13th report is entitled “Certificate of Nomination of Caroline Maynard to the Position of Information Commissioner”.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 53rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs entitled, “Interim Estimates 2018-19”.

* * *

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in accordance with subsection 54(1) of the Access to Information Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. A-1, and pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the appointment of Caroline Maynard as Information Commissioner, for a term of seven years.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is in regard to seniors poverty and the real and determined need in this country for a policy to protect seniors so they do not slip below the poverty line. The petitioners ask that there be a committee set up to ensure that the provinces, territories, and the federal government come together to ensure that seniors have access to high-quality health care and that their income security is guaranteed.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is in regard to my bill, Bill C-355, on the protection of the Thames River. As you know, Mr. Speaker, currently we are debating a bill that is supposed to protect navigable waters but does not. Protection for rivers like the Thames is nowhere to be seen in the current Liberal legislation. These petitioners are asking that the government abandon that and support my bill to make sure that rivers like the Thames are indeed protected.

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling today my first electronic petition, petition e-1220, on the subject of project proposals for the disposal of radioactive waste and regarding future environmental assessment regulations. I would like to thank my constituent Lynn Jones for her tremendous leadership on this important initiative.

Routine Proceedings

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition from 100 residents from Rocky Mountain House, Sherwood Park, and Edmonton. They call on the House of Commons assembled to vigorously defend their freedoms by removing the attestation requirement from the Canada summer jobs application, therefore restoring the confidence of Canadians that all constitutional rights and freedoms are respected by their government and that faith-based applicants will continue to be able to operate freely under the program.

● (1550)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of petitioners note that Canada has been a leader in the fight for human rights since the Act Against Slavery in Upper Canada, in 1793, and note also that we are in the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. They call upon the government to declare August 1 emancipation day across Canada.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by several hundred people that was initiated by a resident of my riding, Hochelaga. Her name is Natalia Lepleyskaya, and I would like to thank her for her hard work.

Between November 4, 2015, and December 6, 2016, over one million temporary resident visa applications were denied by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and according to a World Economic Forum report, Canada ranks 120th out of 136 countries with respect to visa granting policies.

This petition is calling on the federal government to improve and simplify the temporary resident visa application process by making it transparent, simple, fast, and differentiated.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in this place from constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands who are calling on the House to consider the international plight of small family farmers, many of whom are women, who in a very work-intensive, labour-intensive activity collect and save their own seeds. The petitioners ask that the government's international aid strategies support such small family farmers, recognize their vital role in the fight against poverty, and ensure that Canadian policies and programs support the right of small family farmers to preserve, use, and freely exchange seeds.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of citizens of Winnipeg Centre who request that the federal government condemn the illegal arrest of a Canadian citizen for practising Falun Gong. The petitioners call for the immediate and unconditional release of

Canadian citizen Ms. Qian Sun. I hope the Canadian government will call upon the Chinese republic to release Ms. Qian Sun.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring voices from Gabriola Island, West Vancouver, Delta, and Victoria, B.C., and from Drayton Valley, Alberta, all urging the government to cancel five bulk anchorages proposed off Gabriola Island, which is my home also. These are proposed for the export of Wyoming coal to China to burn in power plants. The petitioners cite the chance of human error leading to oil spills, with catastrophic consequences for marine mammals, for the coastline, for fishing charters, and for the local economy that is dependent on a clean coast. The minister has recently announced a new policy on the alignment of anchorages, with no mention of the Gabriola anchorages proposed. We urge the government to heed the petitioners' advice.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition regarding the pharmacare program. The petition is calling on the government to work with the provinces and territories to put in place a pharmacare plan as a part of the Canada Health Act. Given yesterday's budget, I am very pleased to table the petition today.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 19 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin debate on the budget presented to the House yesterday.

We, the Conservative opposition, listened with one question in mind yesterday: what has this Liberal government really accomplished? I think it is important to stay focused on facts and figures when evaluating this government's economic performance.

• (1555)

[English]

As we know, the members of the current government like to talk a lot, but now more than half their mandate is behind them, so it is no longer sufficient to talk about what was promised in the 2015 election. Now it is time to talk about what they have actually accomplished. It is time to measure the rhetoric against the achievements.

When Conservatives heard this budget yesterday, we had one thought going through our minds: never before has a politician spent so much and achieved so little.

The government will have lots of talking points. We saw yesterday that it trotted out its argument that the Canadian government experienced growth thanks to the extra spending it put into the economy. That is patently false. Any economic improvement that has occurred in Canada is not happening because of the Liberal government; it is happening despite the Liberal government.

It was also a wasted opportunity. Yesterday could have been a moment for the government to start delivering on its promises to Canadians, but for the Prime Minister, yesterday's budget was mostly useful for deflecting criticism for his ethical failures and the outrage over his plan to raise taxes on local businesses.

Let us spare a moment for our hard-working entrepreneurs and small business owners for what they have had to go through for the past seven months under the Liberal government. Members will remember, in the summer, the much-vaunted plan of the Liberal government, of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Members will remember the rhetoric they used, insulting all those hard-working people who create jobs and opportunities in our society. They called them tax cheats. They said that the new measures were aimed at making sure that those who were using fancy accounting schemes would pay their fair share.

The amount of anxiety the government has caused, not just for the 1.8 million small business owners in this country but for the millions more who work for those businesses, was a completely irresponsible act.

The Budget

I got my start in a small business. I did not inherit a family fortune. I had to work my way through university. My parents were very generous. They let me stay at home for free, and every month, they bought me my bus pass. I would go off to work at a restaurant, where I waited tables to pay my tuition.

That is the type of hard work and experience that the vast majority of Canadians have to go through to get their start in life. Most of us do not get it handed to us for nothing.

I learned in that experience. Many times when I would walk out the back door of that restaurant, I would pass by that owner. I would hear him on the phone sometimes negotiating with a supplier, trying to get an extra couple of weeks of credit, trying to get a discount on the supplies for the weeks ahead, because it is not always a good week, and it is not always a good month. Every time he was stressed about his business, I was stressed about my job. That is why Conservatives are so passionate about defending the interests of small businesses across this country.

The Liberals have completely flip-flopped on this. Three or four times throughout the past few weeks they have completely changed direction on this whole issue. They have walked back much of what they were intent on doing. Let us remember that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance would do these press conferences. When the finance minister was allowed to speak, he would say things like, "There is no way we are backing off this." Despite the backlash, despite the outrage, they were going to proceed with these tax hikes.

What we see in yesterday's budget is that the Liberals have completely flip-flopped once again. Why then, Conservatives ask, did they have to put all those hard-working people through all that anxiety in the first place?

[Translation]

The Prime Minister claims that the Canadian economy's strong performance is a result of his spending. One thing is certain: he is spending a lot of money. He promised during the election campaign to increase spending, but things have not happened exactly as planned. He said he would borrow no more than \$10 billion a year and that he would balance the budget by 2019. He said he would spend that money on infrastructure, which contributes to long-term growth. I put my faith in numbers, and I judge by results, not intentions. After three years, we have the numbers to determine whether he has done what he promised.

The deficit announced in Tuesday's budget is \$18 billion. That is three times higher than what was promised. That is the first broken promise.

• (1600)

[English]

Since growth was higher than expected in 2017, tax revenues were higher. Canadians need to understand that these deficits are the result of a decision made by the Liberal government, not economic conditions.

The Budget

According to the government's own numbers, the budget will not be balanced again until 2045. That is 27 more years of borrowing, adding over \$450 billion to our national debt. My son Thomas is about to turn 13. He will be 40 before the budget will be balanced. The vast majority of his working life will see his tax dollars going to pay off debt racked up by the Liberal government to be spent today. None of us would do that to our own kids and our own households. None of us would rack up spending and leave them with the bill.

That is a common value shared by all Canadians, whether our families have been here for multiple generations or whether we are from a family that has arrived in Canada more recently to take advantage of all the opportunities that our country has to offer. One thing that we can all share in common is the principle that those of us today work hard so that the next generation has better opportunities.

How many of us know the story of someone who has lived above a restaurant or lived behind a store? These people scrimp and save and put money away for education. They go without for themselves so that their kids will have opportunities that they did not have, maybe it is extra tutoring, maybe it is extracurricular activities. There is a look of pride on their faces when that child graduates from post-secondary education, knowing that all that sacrifice paid off, that their kids will have a better quality of life than they themselves had. That is the tradition that the Liberal government is breaking with these massive deficits for the next 27 years.

That is why Conservatives get so passionate about balanced budgets. We do not believe in balanced budgets just because we like to see black ink on the ledger. We do not advocate for a reduction of deficits just to get a good bond rating from an international credit organization. We do it because we know there is a real human cost to these deficits. We know that future generations of Canadians will have to work harder because the present Prime Minister cannot get his spending under control. That is why we fight so passionately for this issue.

[Translation]

In their first three years in power, the Prime Minister and his Liberals have increased government spending by 20%. That is very troubling, but the thing that should worry us even more is that that money is not being spent how the Prime Minister promised. Three-quarters was used to support program spending. There is nothing new, nothing that constitutes an investment in our future prosperity, and nothing that corresponds to the lofty promises the Prime Minister made to Canadians. Only 2% of the additional spending was used to pay for real projects. He actually reduced infrastructure spending.

[English]

These are all facts that we must remember when we hear the Liberals try to take credit for Canada's recent economic performance or when they talk about giving Canadians a break.

The Liberal government knows how to break promises with the best of them but when it comes to delivering, when it comes time to make the tough choices, to choose some priorities, the Liberals just cannot deliver. They fail to provide actual results for Canadians.

All of this borrowing and overspending leaves us vulnerable to any sudden downturn or economic instability. The recent gyrations

in global markets should remind us all that Canada is not an oasis. We can be affected by international crises, swings in commodity prices, and trade agreements. All of these are problems beyond our control. That is why the government has a responsibility to be ready, particularly in a country like Canada, which has significant vulnerabilities in consumer debt and housing.

[Translation]

The facts very clearly show that periods of growth do not last forever. There are highs and lows. Any government that claims to be a responsible manager of taxpayer money must never forget this fact. Any government that does not understand that periods of growth do not last forever is lying not only to Canadians, but also to itself.

• (1605)

[English]

As the government tries to take credit for last year's growth, most forecasters are already pointing out dangerous signals on the horizon. Interest rates are likely to rise, which will not only have an effect on household finances but will make the cost of all this Liberal borrowing that much more expensive for future generations of Canadians. If a downturn were to occur, tax revenues would fall and these government expenses would continue to soar.

In OECD countries, the deficit usually worsens by about 2% of GDP in just a mild recession, or up to 3% to 5% in a severe downturn like we saw in 2009. If we are already running larger deficits today and then have to add to it, the cupboard will be empty before the government is able to respond. This is appallingly irresponsible.

Let us recall the justification for these deficits. During the election, the Prime Minister said that he would spend extra money on infrastructure and that would be the cause of the deficits. However, yesterday's budget shows that infrastructure spending, the very thing the Liberals claimed would stimulate the economy and add to growth, was cut by over \$2 billion.

[Translation]

The fact is that all of this borrowed money will have to be repaid in the form of tax hikes. This is why the average family is paying over \$800 more in taxes every year.

This increase comes from the elimination of the children's sports and arts tax credits, a decrease in the TFSA contribution limit, an end to income splitting, the carbon tax, and an increase in payroll taxes.

This is in stark contrast to the promises made by this Liberal government.

It even wanted to tax the EI and dental plans, employee discounts, and treatments for diabetics. The government only backtracked because of pressure from the Conservative opposition.

The Budget

[English]

This is why we cannot trust the government when its members talk about helping families or reducing taxes. We just do not believe them. We believe that every time they have tried to impose a new tax or take away a credit, they have pulled back, and it has happened many times. We recall that the Liberals tried to tax employee discounts. They were going to tax medical and dental plans. They even tried to take away tax credits for people with diabetes. Every single time, Conservatives raised our voices, amplified the hard work of Canadians across the country who were going to be affected by these tax hikes, and we were able to get them to back down. In fact, if we look back to the fall, it becomes clear that the most popular Liberal announcement was when the Liberals were announcing that they were abandoning one of their previous announcements.

Canadians need to remember this. Imagine what they would do if they thought they could away with it. Imagine what they would do, emboldened, if they were given a second term. Their hidden agenda on tax hikes and making it harder for small businesses to grow and expand is truly scary, and Conservatives will always point that out to Canadians leading up to the next election.

Members will recall that the Liberals promised to cut taxes for small businesses during the last election, but they refused. In fact, in their first two budgets, they abandoned this plan altogether. It was only the Conservative Party that forced them, kicking and screaming, reluctantly, to keep their campaign promise to lower taxes for small businesses. The government is always asking more from Canadians.

[Translation]

Ordinary families are having to forgo their benefits and pay more tax so that the Liberal government has more money to spend on its pet projects, and so that the well-connected can get ahead of those who are simply trying to make ends meet.

[English]

With the Liberals, it is always government before people. This is backwards. Conservatives will put people before government.

We have all been fortunate in Canada to enjoy so much opportunity, but it did not come from nowhere. It was the product of the hard work of generations that came before us. We should be thinking of the generations that will follow. What will their opportunities be? Will they have the same ones? Conservatives know that government has to provide an environment that helps create those opportunities, which does not happen when government always takes more with one hand than it gives with the other.

• (1610)

[Translation]

We must ensure that our actions today provide options for our children and grandchildren. This means balancing the budget, so that they are not stuck paying off our debt.

This means keeping taxes low, so that families have money to save and invest in their children's futures. There is more to society than government. This is crucial. There is a better option. The government should take advantage of our economic strength to

compensate Canadian families for their hard work and success, instead of asking them to pay even more.

[English]

The government needs to get its borrowing and spending under control so that we do not pass our debts on to the next generation of Canadians. This budget was an opportunity to finally deliver something for Canadians and it was one the Liberal government chose not to take. Liberals inherited, as a government, a great fortune. They inherited a balanced budget. They inherited the lowest tax burden on Canadians since the Second World War. They have inherited a situation where commodity prices have doubled since they took power.

There is no excuse for these deficits. The Liberals are blowing their inheritance. Much of what they are doing does not benefit Canadians. Some \$500 million will be taken from hard-working Canadians and spent in an Asian infrastructure bank to build projects in other countries. Nobody living in a Canadian city wants to see their tax dollars go to build projects around the world. They want those dollars to be spent making their lives better.

This is the Prime Minister who has no problem seeing deficits go from \$6 billion, as promised, to \$18 billion and then has the audacity to look a Canadian hero in the eye and tell our veterans that they were asking for more than the government could give. That is shameful.

What will not be a surprise is that Conservatives will be voting against the budget, unless we can convince the Liberals to amend the motion. That is why I move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

the House rejects the government's budget statement because it fails middle class Canadians, women and business operators by raising taxes on over 90% of Canadian middle-class families; announcing new tax hikes on local businesses; borrowing an additional \$18 billion; jeopardizing our future generations by choosing not to balance the budget by 2019; spending so much to achieve so little.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's story about living at home during university. It is a blessing to come from a good family, to be able to look after your children, care for your family, and to have that privilege. However, not all families have that opportunity.

There are many families in Canada who simply cannot seem to get ahead. For instance, indigenous children under the age of 14 make up 7.7% of all children in Canada, but they represent more than half of all children in foster care. This means that indigenous children have a much higher chance of being separated from their families, communities, and cultures, and this needs to change.

In Winnipeg alone, a newborn is seized every day. A newborn is taken from her parents every day and without even proof sometimes of whether it is a good or a bad parent. There are only allegations of abuse, for instance, in about 13% of the cases when children are seized in Manitoba, meaning that 87% of the children who are taken are just simply too poor.

The Budget

The government in this budget has committed \$1.4 billion of new funding, for six years starting in 2017, to conform with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition had to balance the budget, how would he balance that budget? Where would you cut? Where would you take out? Would it be on the backs of indigenous people? Would it be on the backs of veterans? How do you make those decisions, because we have given an awful lot of funding to many of these groups that depend on this.

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members to direct their questions through the Chair and not directly. It makes it a lot easier in the long run.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate his interventions as well. I believe, in most cases, they come from a very sincere perspective and a genuine desire to represent his constituents. However, he was not here in the last Parliament, and maybe he was not aware that it was his party that opposed granting the same human rights to women on reserve from which every other woman in our country benefits. Maybe he forgets those rights we extended when it came to matrimonial property on reserve, which the Liberal Party fought so hard against.

When we talk about the poverty facing first nations, both on and off reserve, maybe he is not aware of the dozens and dozens of first nations communities that want to partner in our natural resource sector, that support pipelines, like northern gateway, that would bring prosperity to people all over the country, both indigenous and non-indigenous alike.

When it comes to where we would stop spending money, we have a lot of examples we could look at, some big, and some small. Some big would be the Asian infrastructure bank, which is \$500 million spent to build projects outside of Canada, or the Canadian Infrastructure Bank, which will use tax dollars of the very people who go work in his riding every day, using public transit, walking home in the cold, paying some of their taxes to guarantee profits for bankers and billionaire investors. The Conservatives would not do that.

Some things we would cut would be very small in terms of the scale of government, like an ice-skating rink for \$10 million that we cannot play hockey on, and just a few metres away from the world's longest skating rink in the world; or like a \$10 million payout to Omar Khadr, a convicted terrorist who fought against this country; or \$100,000 for a person to manage a ministerial Twitter account.

If the hon. member really wants to see the wasteful spending the Conservatives would cut, I suggest he vote for us in the next election.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has obviously indicated his passion for balancing the budget. I would like to know if he shares our passion for the need to address the growing inequality in our country.

I wonder if he feels it is acceptable today that two Canadian billionaire businessmen own as much wealth as 11 million

Canadians; or if he is okay with four million people living with food insecurity, including one and a half million children. How does he feel about the use of tax havens? How does he feel about Starbucks being able to use transfer pricing to keep its profits in the Cayman Islands or elsewhere and pay little or no taxes, yet the company across the country, that small business, has to pay its fair share.

Is the Conservative Party in favour of that regime or will he join us and try to address this growing inequality in our country?

• (1620)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are very passionate about returning to balanced budgets.

During the height of the recession, when countries reacted to the global downturn, there was a lot written about Keynesian economics, and that is counter cyclical. During times of downturns governments spend more money to fill in the gap. The problem is that I have never actually met a true Keynesian. Then when the economy comes out of recession, the Liberals' response is to keep spending money. When there is a recession, the Liberals and the NDP always ask for more spending. However, when we are out of recession and see growth, the Liberals and NDP say we should still have deficits and more spending. When is it ever okay to stop borrowing money from future generations of Canadians?

When it comes to income inequality, nothing has done more to lift people out of poverty, to create better opportunities, and to improve the quality of life, than free people making free decisions in a free market. The free market has provided so much prosperity for everyone in the country. It is what empowers low-income Canadians to improve their lots in life.

The answer from the left is always to achieve equality by dragging people down. The Conservative response is to increase opportunities by lifting people up. That will always be a fundamental difference between our two parties.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that over the last two years there has been a real difference in our competitiveness, a real slide in Canada's competitiveness on the global market. We have seen it especially in the natural resource sector, where increasing regulations, taxes, and a different regime have made Canada's natural resource sector, especially, and manufacturing sector, less competitive as our number one customer becomes our number one competitor.

I saw nothing in the budget that addressed the competitiveness gap between Canada and especially the U.S., and nothing about NAFTA.

Could he talk about what was not in this budget specifically around our competitiveness as a country?

The Budget

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, that is the best question I have heard so far on this issue. However, I wish someone on the Liberal side was asking that question while the budget was being prepared.

I talked about the anxiety felt among people who worked in small business and how they felt their jobs were threatened by the Liberal tax hikes. The same anxiety exists over NAFTA. When we travel all across the country, especially in parts of southwestern Ontario or our natural resource sector, people talk about what happens if NAFTA goes off the rails. Nothing in this budget provides any kind of comfort to indicate the government has a plan. That is shameful, and is certainly adding to the anxiety felt by millions of Canadians.

When we look at our natural resource sector, I would not be so smug if I were a Liberal today. All we see are the billions of dollars of capital that has left Canada over the past few years, the billions of dollars in cancelled projects in the natural resource sector, and the billions of dollars leaving to go to other economies.

It is not about the dollars and cents; it is about the jobs that go along with it, it is about the people who are affected by that. Our allies are also our competitors. They are taking steps to make their economies more attractive to bring those jobs to their countries. Australia has repealed its carbon tax. The socialist government in France has abandoned its plan to impose a carbon tax. The Canadian Liberal government is plotting ahead no matter what the consequences.

The Prime Minister actually bragged at a ski resort full of billionaires that he would take absolutely no steps to keep our country competitive, especially as it relates to the United States. That is a very dangerous signal. It may have got a round of applause from his billionaire friends, but it is not getting any applause from Canadians who are worried about their job.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government tabled its 2018 budget yesterday, and we are sad to say that this year's exercise appears to be another missed opportunity to build an economy that would benefit all Canadians.

[English]

Budget 2018 is another missed opportunity to build an economy that lifts everyone up.

• (1625)

[Translation]

The government is perpetuating two realities in Canada: one for the ultra rich, the powerful, the friends of government; the other for everyone else. A budget is not an opportunity to show that we have identified problems; it is an opportunity to address problems, to propose concrete solutions that will change things for the better, and to use our taxes for the common good, that is for the good of ordinary Canadians who are at work, at home, or on the streets. That is the role of government. Unfortunately, this government has again chosen to favour the privileged and to let everyone else wait.

[English]

A budget is an annual exercise to ensure that Canada's economy works for people first, not just the wealthy and the well-connected. The inequality gap between Canada's wealthiest and the rest of Canadians has never been greater in our country. This is unacceptable.

When the Prime Minister told Sears' retirees to get used to EI and CPP after their pensions were stolen, he told all Canadians that they should get used to inequality. However, we will not get used to it, not while so many people do not have what they need.

Today, two Canadian billionaire businessmen own as much wealth as 11 million Canadians altogether. At the same time, more than four million people live with food insecurity, including 1.15 million children here in Canada.

Too many people believe the economy is not working for them. What they see instead is an uneven playing field where only the few at the top benefit at the expense of everyone else.

[Translation]

With all that has been said and written, in this place and elsewhere, about tax havens and the billions of dollars being channelled everywhere but into our pockets, we would have wanted the Government of Canada to lead the charge. We want Canada to champion the fight against tax inequality, but that is not what we see in this budget. This is a missed opportunity.

Let us talk a little about tax havens. For several months, we have been going after the government on the issue of tax havens. The only thing the government has said about this issue is that it has spent \$1 billion in the hopes of potentially recovering \$25 billion. In actual fact, it has only spent \$40 million to date, not \$1 billion. It will by no means reach the \$25-billion target. The government is trying to make us believe that it is tackling income inequality, but it is protecting tax havens.

When the Minister of National Revenue and the Prime Minister give us the statistics on how many investigations have been launched and how many millions of dollars have been recovered, we have to consider that the victims of the government's scheme are not the KPMGs or the wealthy of this world, but everyday taxpayers. People from Quebec involved in the fight against tax havens tried to meet with government officials to share their concerns. They learned that the Canada Revenue Agency is using a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether to enforce the law or not. The law is in place and should be enforced equally for everyone. The Liberals tell us they have taxpayers' interests at heart and that they are dealing with tax havens, but these examples are far from reassuring.

Worse yet, despite the fact that the Liberals say that they want to combat tax havens, they keep signing treaties with tax havens. Tax treaties open the door to allowing Canadian investors to send their money offshore and then bring it back without paying taxes. That is what the government is facilitating. The Liberal government is talking out of both sides of its mouth. We really have to pay attention to what the Liberals are doing and not to what they are saying.

The Budget

The Liberals refuse to deal with the matter of inequality when it comes to the way taxes are imposed, the way businesses are asked to impose sales tax. Canadian companies are required to charge sales tax on products and services. However, Amazon, Netflix, Facebook, and Google are not required to do these same. Why is the Government of Canada insisting on giving American companies a competitive advantage of 12% to 15% right off the bat? It makes no sense. The government should ensure that Canada's tax laws apply to everyone.

Speaking of equality, we also need to look at regional inequalities. For example, the current government, like the previous government, has not done anything to resolve high-speed Internet and especially cellphone service issues in the regions. Investments have been made to increase access to high-speed Internet, but they are too slow in coming. There is nothing in this budget except vague promises regarding satellite capacity. Still today, too many regions do not have access to cellphone service. The government is taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the G7 conference that will be held in Charlevoix to provide that region with the appropriate infrastructure, but there is nothing in the budget for other regions. That is a rather cynical approach.

• (1630)

[English]

The funding announced for water and waste water infrastructure in first nations communities is almost \$2 billion short of the government's conservative estimate of what is required to end all drinking water advisories and to have adequate infrastructure in those communities.

We are glad to see funding for indigenous-specific housing strategies, but the specific details have not been announced, even after years of delay. The housing needs are urgent, and indigenous peoples cannot afford to wait.

We are glad to see funding for first nations child and family services, but with the government's refusal to disclose the funding gap, there is no way to tell if this funding is sufficient.

Indigenous housing needs are specific, and crisis shelters in the north are needed. Funding often goes only to on-reserve shelters, which addresses only part of the demand of indigenous women experiencing violence.

There is nothing in the budget that removes the funding cap for the post-secondary student support program for indigenous students, and that constitutes a barrier to education opportunities for indigenous peoples.

There is also nothing in the budget on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, whether it be to ensure that it is fully resourced or to respond to some of the recommendations that were issued thus far in the interim report.

Let me read a quote:

We will work with our provincial partners to ensure that all Canadians have access to medically necessary drugs within the public health care system. The federal government has a role to play in bringing together its provincial and territorial partners and a range of other interests to develop a national plan and timetable for introducing prescription drugs into our medicare system.

Was that in the budget? No, it was not. It was in the Liberal platform of 1997. Eleven years later, Canadians are cutting up pills. They are behind on bills. They are dipping into their savings and credit cards to afford the medication they need.

When it comes to the health of Canadians, the Liberal government has let people down year after year. What was the finance minister's response yesterday? It was four more years of pharmacare studies. These studies will be led by someone who is on the record as saying that pharmacare has been studied to death.

The government has already spent two years studying how to implement pharmacare, thanks to the bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway. The consultation has been done. The government knows how much it would save Canadians. All that is lacking is the courage to implement it.

Less than 24 hours after this budget was tabled, the finance minister was already backtracking on the promise to introduce universal pharmacare. He is already musing about a public-private mix, which was strongly advised against by expert witnesses at the health committee. Are Canadians supposed to believe that the Prime Minister is serious about implementing pharmacare, when the budget allocates no money to funding it and his finance minister is already talking about imposing limits on the coverage?

A diagnosis should not be a death sentence. Canadians cannot afford any more delays when it comes to making prescription drugs more affordable. The time to study pharmacare is over. The time to implement universal pharmacare for all Canadians is now.

• (1635)

[Translation]

The Liberals announced a legislative framework to ensure pay equity, but they did not allocate any money to implement it. Why then did they spend so much time presenting that legislation?

Let us not forget that the Liberals were already talking about pay equity in 2016 and 2017. In 2018, they promised legislation. Women have already waited too long. The government needs to immediately implement a strategy to encourage all of the provinces and territories to also adopt measures to ensure that businesses under their jurisdiction achieve pay equity. We still welcome its pay equity measures, as long as the government keeps its word this time.

This is a timid budget that is big on symbolism but short on substance and specifics.

[English]

In 2017, the opioid crisis claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 people in Canada. The President of the United States has declared a national public health emergency to provide communities with the tools they need to address this major crisis. What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

The Budget

On this side of the border, the \$231 million over five years is welcome, but it is almost \$100 million less than the \$320 million over three years announced by the provincial government of British Columbia. This is an urgent crisis of unprecedented scale. It is crucial to provide front-line workers with the funding they need to do their jobs.

[Translation]

On the climate change file, the federal government is moving backwards. The weak measures it has put forward do not reflect the urgency of the situation. Furthermore, 90% of the promised funding will not be invested until after the next election, which is a recurring theme in this budget. If the government really wants to focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it needs to step up its efforts now.

After promising in 2015 to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, the Liberals did not even address the issue in this budget. Getting rid of fossil fuel subsidies would save the government \$1.3 billion a year. If the government continues to increase the production of greenhouse gases and approve projects like Kinder Morgan, for example, it will never meet its Paris Agreement commitments.

Nine months ago, on May 26, 2017, the Minister of Transport put out a news release saying that he would announce a national strategy on electric vehicles by 2018. I must inform the government and the Minister of Transport that it is 2018. Not only are we still waiting for the strategy, but yesterday's budget said nothing about moving forward and contained no subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles. The federal budget is yet another missed opportunity to take real action against climate change.

We do welcome the new investments to support rental construction that were announced. However, let us be clear. This does not refer to social housing. According to figures from the last census, nearly 796,000 Canadian renter households spend more than half their income on housing. Their median income is \$14,900—yes, you heard me, \$14,900. The housing crisis needs to be resolved now, not after the election. These people are languishing on waiting lists, but from the looks of this budget, the Liberals are in no hurry to invest in a solution.

[English]

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated that this budget “missed a key opportunity to generate frontline outcomes by expediting repairs to Canada's social housing supply to kick-start the National Housing Strategy.”

Canadians, pushed to the edge of their finances by skyrocketing housing costs, cannot afford for the Liberals to play politics with this funding.

[Translation]

How many times have we talked about the urgent need for the government to protect print media, a pillar of our democracy? In response to the possibility of a number of our print media outlets shuttering because of current financial difficulties, the Minister of Canadian Heritage led us to believe that she would take vigorous and decisive action on this file.

Newspapers' advertising revenue, much of which coming from the government, has plummeted, with that money now flowing to online media, yet the minister is putting up \$50 million over five years, which is \$10 million per year, to support local journalism in underserved communities. Over the past two years, some 15,000 journalism jobs have disappeared, but the best she can do is a band-aid solution.

Employment insurance benefits will be drying up for many seasonal workers in the coming weeks. For years now, they have been trying to figure out how to get around the spring gap. Once again, the Liberals are refusing to solve the problem even though there is a simple and obvious solution. Since 1971, people who get sick have been able to claim 15 weeks of employment insurance benefits at 55% of their usual income. The Liberals promised to increase the number of weeks for which sick people can collect employment insurance benefits, but there is nothing about that in this budget. Everyone knows that, for most Canadians, 15 weeks of disability benefits is not enough.

There is nothing in the 2018 budget to prevent a company like Sears from putting its shareholders and preferred creditors ahead of its workers' benefits and pension plans. The Prime Minister seems to think that our flawed employment insurance system is good enough to protect workers and retirees from pension theft, but those of us on this side of the House know it is not enough, and here I should mention my colleague from Hamilton Mountain's work on that front.

● (1640)

[English]

Budget 2018 lacks courage. The government is still scared to stand up to its friends, the richest 1%, who profit from an unfair tax system. Were it to tackle the tax breaks used by Canada's wealthiest, the government could redistribute the money to those who need it the most. At a time of emergencies and crises, the government is rolling out delay tactics: delays on housing, delays on pharmacare, and delays on infrastructure spending. All this is despite adding \$7 billion to the promised deficit.

Canadians must be wondering what they are getting for their money. Families that cannot afford their homes cannot afford delays. Canadians who cannot afford their medication cannot afford delays on pharmacare. Our communities, which depend on publicly owned infrastructure, cannot wait on federal funding to start construction.

[Translation]

This government is obsessed with studies. At some point, we need to leave the studies behind and find the courage to do what we have to do in order to give Canadians what they need to get ahead. This budget does not do that.

The Budget

Now is not the time to be timid. Now is the time to take bold and courageous action to reduce inequality. We can do that by closing the tax loopholes exploited by the ultra-rich and using that money for public services that everyone can benefit from, like affordable, universal child care and universal pharmacare now, or by applying GST to web giants like Netflix, because the current arrangement creates an unfair playing field for Canadian businesses trying to compete with foreign companies.

Ultimately, we do not sit in the House of Commons for ourselves. We sit in the House of Commons for the people who are not here. We are working for them.

[English]

We are working for people who are not in the House of Commons, to make sure they can live a better life, dream bigger, and build a better future for themselves, for their children, and for their grandchildren. This budget puts those dreams on hold for too many.

[Translation]

That is why I would like to move a subamendment. I move that the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after the words “because it” and substituting the following:

- (a) does not adequately address tax havens and tax loopholes that benefit the rich;
- (b) does not provide any funding for the immediate establishment of a universal pharmacare system;
- (c) does not immediately address the nationwide housing crisis; and
- (d) does not provide the necessary funding to eliminate long-term boil water advisories and upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure in Indigenous communities by 2020.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Veterans; the hon. member for Hochelaga, Housing.

● (1645)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the member on his comportment in the House. He was rational and polite, and I really appreciate that.

I was surprised at a couple of the items he put forward with respect to the amendments. One was about the long-term boil water advisories. It is a strength of the budget that 52 have been reduced already and the rest of them will be by 2021. Another part of the amendment is on tax loopholes. We have put in over \$1 billion already, which is far more than the NDP promised in its platform. Why these two items?

The member also suggested that there have been delays with respect to infrastructure. I cannot speak for the rest of the country, but in my riding we have already approved 60 projects for over \$400 million. We are virtually at full employment because of that and because of some previous budget items.

I think my colleague will appreciate my question. Would he agree that the workers tax credit should have been increased, and that it was good to increase it? In my riding alone, that adds 300 more people to the list, and roughly 1,200 Yukoners will get an increase

because of that. That is one thousandth of the population. That is a massive change for people living in poverty. One of the reasons I got into Parliament was to help people living in poverty.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has also shown lots of respect in the debates in this House, and I would like to acknowledge that.

Actually, I heard a few questions, not just one. First, in terms of the boil water advisories, it is a recurring problem, and the investments needed right now are actually a lot less than what would be required to solve the problems. He mentioned the advisories that have been lifted because of investments, but others have been created because of a lack of investment. The crisis is still ongoing, and it is clear that the monies promised to solve the problem will not be enough.

In terms of the loopholes and the \$1 billion invested, I mentioned in my speech that even though the government likes to talk about that \$1 billion being invested, so far we are talking about only \$40 million. Let me remind my colleague that most of that money is going to target the small taxpayers, not the KPMGs of this world. I am told that KPMG will benefit from amnesty for the scheme it has set up in the Isle of Man, and I find it shameful. That is true, and it is shameful. For the same type of scheme, U.S. KPMG officials received a criminal sentence. Here they have not even been prosecuted, but that \$1 billion will be spent on ensuring that the small taxpayer will be pursued to the full extent of the law. Really, it is a two-tier justice system for taxpayers in this country.

I acknowledge that my colleague is seeing some good in this budget. Yes, there will be good investments, but believe me, most of it is going to be invested after the next election. I have the feeling that for things like pharmacare and infrastructure the Liberals will campaign by saying that to get those things people will have to vote for them. In talking about infrastructure, if my colleague looks at the budget, he will see that the money promised for infrastructure has been reduced for next year, and there are many more needs, as was highlighted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

● (1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on his excellent and very eloquent speech. He was talking about tax havens.

I know that everyone in Canada knows that the money that ends up in tax havens represents lost tax revenues, lost investments that we should be making for the common good.

My colleague talked about what we see in the budget. The government is planning to recover \$70 million. As the hon. member aptly pointed out, the government is primarily going after SMEs and closing some tax loopholes.

The Budget

Could my colleague explain the difference between this small amount of money that the government is going to recover in the coming years and the amount of money that should be coming back to be used and invested for the common good of all Canadians?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his excellent work. He continues to hold the government's feet to the fire on this important issue.

The government says that it is taking action on tax havens. It says that it hopes to recover \$70 million. We should have a better idea of the specific amounts when the parliamentary budget officer conducts his study on the tax gap. However, it should be possible to recover at least \$8 billion and possibly as much as \$12 billion if the work is done properly. We must ensure that taxes owed to Canada are paid and that this money does not flow to tax havens.

At a minimum, this is \$8 billion to \$12 billion that could be invested in our public services and that would enable us to implement a universal pharmacare system and improve our universal health care plan.

We are currently losing this money because the government is not doing its due diligence on tax fairness. We are talking about tax havens, but I also pointed out that the government has refused to ensure that Canadian and U.S. businesses are on the same footing. The government is giving U.S. businesses a 15% competitive advantage over Canadian businesses. Is this government working in the interests of U.S. or Canadian businesses? To the best of my knowledge, Canadian businesses are the ones paying taxes. U.S. companies that compete against them on Canadian soil should also pay taxes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

I have a great deal of respect and esteem for my colleague, the leader of the second opposition in the House of Commons, particularly for the courage and resolve the NDP showed two and a half years ago when it told Canadian taxpayers, in a realistic and responsible manner, that budgets need to be balanced.

Many will recall the sad day when the Liberals promised the opposite. When I say “the sad day”, to clarify, I do believe in democracy and I respect the will of the people, but the reality is that those folks over there were elected on a promise to run a small \$6-billion deficit, for example, in 2018 and magically return to a balanced budget in 2019. The reality is that the deficit is three times higher, and worse still, we have no idea when we will return to a balanced budget.

My question for the NDP parliamentary leader is this: what does he think of the deficit? More importantly, what does he think of those people who are now doing the opposite of what they promised they would do during the election?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question. I appreciate our conversations, although we unfortunately do not get to talk as often anymore.

As for his question, if the government must run a deficit, the deficit must at least serve a purpose. If the government is running a

deficit in order to invest in something that will ultimately provide a return on investment, that could be positive. This is what the Liberals promised during the election campaign. They said that they would run deficits in order to invest in infrastructure.

Over time, the premise has changed. The government is investing less and less in infrastructure, even as it is running higher deficits than it had planned. The government is trying to skirt its promise by creating the infrastructure bank, which will hold funds, like the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec, but will also hold investments from Saudi Arabia, Australia, China, and Qatar. At the end of the day, these investors will be deciding what to invest in, since they will hold about 80% of the capital. If we need to build a bridge or a highway, this fund, and not the communities in need, will decide what is a priority.

This is a big problem, because this is not what the Liberals had promised during the election campaign. Canadians did not vote to gradually lose control over our infrastructure.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to budget 2018. I think we can say that it was a great day for Canadians yesterday when the budget was released. In particular, the budget is doing things to further advance gender equality throughout our entire economic workforce in the country. In my remarks today, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight three things in the budget.

One of the remarkable things about this budget is that it had a number of smaller items within it that perhaps did not get quite the amount of limelight that some of the bigger items did. I am going to take the time to talk about two of those smaller items, and perhaps one of the larger items, if I have time.

The first one I want to talk about is the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack fund. The Government of Canada has chosen to invest \$5 million in this fund through this budget.

A lot of people perhaps do not recognize Gord Downie in particular and the other members of The Tragically Hip as the immense community builders that they are. I am from Kingston, and The Tragically Hip is from Kingston as well. I had the unique opportunity to see behind the scenes how much the five gentlemen in this band contributed to their community. Quite often they did it out of the limelight and without making a spectacle of showing how they helped out different segments of our communities. They did it because they knew the genuine benefit that would be received at the other end.

The Budget

Toward the end of his life, when he knew that his time was limited, Gord Downie used his fame to help build up others, particularly indigenous communities, throughout our country. This fund helps to educate people, especially youth, as to what our residential school system was all about, so that we can learn lessons from that to make sure that our history is told with accuracy, and to make sure that as we move into the future we know exactly what people went through to get to where we are. It is extremely rewarding to see that money has been contributed directly from this budget into that fund. In my opinion, it is supporting a cause that I know Gord Downie would be very happy about.

One of the more national issues I want to talk about is with respect to the changes in the EI benefits, and what this budget is doing to help women in the workforce. My private member's bill that I introduced in this House back in 2016 was about changing our employment insurance system so that women could have more flexibility in their maternity and parental leave. We saw some changes to that in the last budget where there was an extension so that women could start taking their maternity benefits earlier. Originally it was at eight weeks and then it changed to 12 weeks prior to their due date.

Now we are seeing a much larger step in allowing women to get back into the workforce sooner. For couples where both partners choose to split the parental benefits, this budget allows them to split that time and increase it by five weeks. That means there is an advantage for couples who want to split that time. The hope here is that women can get back into the workforce. We know that quite often women are at a disadvantage because of the fact that they sometimes have to choose between whether they want to start a family or participate in the workforce.

We spend a lot of time in this House talking about gender equality in this chamber in particular. It is absolutely imperative to get more women in this House, and to have more women business leaders, lawyers, and doctors.

● (1700)

As one of the organizers for the women's engineering association told me in 2016, there are only 338 seats in this room. We have to do more for women throughout the entire labour market. The reality is that there are a lot of women who want to go into the trades, engineering, mining, and those other fields. If they have to make a decision between having children and pursuing their dream job, they might not choose to do that. I am extremely delighted to see that this has been introduced and is part of the budget because this is another serious step building on what we saw in the 2017 budget.

I will take the remaining amount of time today to talk about one of the small issues in the budget that is resonating extremely well within my community, and that perhaps does not get the limelight but is extremely important for this country. It is buried on page 210 in the budget and it reads, "Reopening the Penitentiary Farms at Joyceville and Collins Bay Institutions", where \$4.3 million will go into reopening prison farms in Collins Bay and Joyceville, which are in and around my community in Kingston.

The reality of the situation is that, in 2010, the previous government chose to close prison farms. It did this without any kind of data, business case, or study. It unilaterally closed prison

farms. There was immediate protest. Farmers, guards, and inmates were asking the former federal government to look into this to make sure that it was making the right decision based on evidence and data. The former government refused to do that.

As a result, we ended up seeing these farms close and huge protests. People continue to protest to this day in front of the Collins Bay penitentiary in my riding. Every Monday night for the past 330 Mondays, since the closing in 2010, people have stood in front of the Collins Bay penitentiary protesting the closure of prison farms. We know that prison farms can contribute to the productive rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates into society.

I would like to read something that was said by a former inmate of the Collins Bay penitentiary. He said, "I've committed crimes since I was six years old. I have been in and out of jail for 40 years and then I got on the farm. I've never worked on a farm in my life. Nobody thought I would last because of who I was and because of my record. Before I knew it, they had me milking cows and they had all of a sudden started me really liking it. There was nothing about a cow I didn't want to know. The barn taught me how to talk to supervisors and ask for help. My experience with prison farms have kept me out of jail, kept my mind off the street."

When we start looking at our prisons as a form of rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and not locking them up and throwing away the key as we saw with the previous government, when we start taking this approach, we will be successful in our corrections program. I was extremely delighted to see that this money was put back into the budget, as were many people in my area and across the country.

As a matter of fact, when the minister came to do a town hall in my riding on this about a year and a half ago, 300 people, regular citizens turned up to talk about why these farms were so important. There were a lot of people along the way who went into making this a reality. I know that a lot of those people such as my predecessor, Ted Hsu, the member of Parliament prior to me, were a driving force on this. I want to thank him for keeping this alive in opposition. I know that the NDP members supported this as well and they should be credited for that.

We are seeing the return of a very important program and I hope that, by bringing this program of the prison farms back to Collins Bay and Joyceville, we will see and be able to properly measure the results so that we can start to distribute the program throughout the country.

I will wrap up with this. This is a good budget for Canada. This is on the right path of being progressive. I have had the opportunity to mention three parts in the budget, but I am happy to take any questions at this time.

● (1705)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are indeed some good news items in the budget, and I enjoyed hearing, from the member's regional perspective, what the highlights were for him.

The Budget

On gender equality and removing barriers to women in the workplace, I had really hoped we would see some new funding for new child care spaces. When I look at what the asks were from the NGO community, the recommendation from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which gathers together all the best NGO advice on the budget, was to commit, in 2018-19, \$1 billion in new money to be transferred to the provinces, territories, and indigenous communities to begin building that comprehensive child care system, with new spaces, and that it should grow by \$1 billion per year until it reaches the established international benchmark of 1% of GDP.

The Canadian Labour Congress made the same ask. Every witness we have had at the status of women committee has said the number one thing we can do to remove barriers to women's economic justice and women entering the workforce is to make new child care spaces. The Canada child benefit does not help women if there are not those new spaces to spend the money on.

Knowing my colleague's commitment to gender equality and women in the workplace, does he share my deep concern that the budget did not put its money where its mouth was as far as gender equality and child care is concerned?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, my wife called me this morning and told me she just wrote the day care cheque for March, and she told me what it was worth. I definitely share in the concern that there is a lot more we could do. We can always do more.

What the budget is doing is starting to make progress on one area. Am I looking forward to working with my colleague across the way in the future on what more we could do? Absolutely, I am. However, we also have to be realistic about where we are in the demand. Let us not forget, with all due respect to my colleague, her party promised a whole lot of stuff and to balance the budget too. We have to be respectful of the fact that we tick off as much as we can as we go, and we have to continue to work on the other things.

I am looking forward to working with her on that as we move into future budgets, so that we can continue to make that entrance for women into the workforce, and continuing in the workforce, even easier.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Kingston and the Islands has been a passionate advocate for the prison farms in his riding. From the very first moment we got here he has been in my ear trying to gain support with his caucus colleagues for this important measure. Of course, what we see in the federal budget I would hope has impact beyond one riding.

We know that recidivism can be a real problem, and the reintegration of prisoners into society upon their release is not where it should be in Canada. Could my colleague please comment on the importance of the lessons learned in Kingston and how that could potentially be expanded to ensure the people who are incarcerated today, across the country, are better able to contribute to society going forward?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, only one of the prisons is actually in my riding. The other one is in the riding of my Conservative colleague, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston. The important part of this is understanding that by putting inmates into these prison farm programs they learn those core skills,

the skills of independence, of teamwork, of being responsible, of having a commitment, and of being able to fulfill obligations and duties. As I read in the quote from the inmate, those are the skills that are so important and that so many inmates are looking for and need.

This is something we should continue to grow. When the results of this program come out, I know they will show that.

• (1710)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak about our vision put forward by our Minister of Finance for budget 2018, equality and growth. I want to first acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people. I want to take this opportunity as well to tell our colleague from Scarborough Centre and her husband Salman Zahid and her boys that we are praying for her recovery and that we are confident that she will be back here very soon.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister and our cabinet for their diligent and hard work in getting this budget out earlier this year than in previous years. There is so much in the budget I am unable to cover many of the aspects I want to cover, but I will focus on a number of key areas.

About six years ago, I had the chance to sit down with the member for Papineau at that time, who was running for leader of the Liberal Party, and we had a very important conversation about the concept of rights. We talked about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and what that means. As part of the conversation, the aspiring leader at that time said that if the 20th century was about defining rights, the 21st century is about giving life to those rights.

As members know, this is the 70th year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we have the 36th year of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We did a fairly good job in defining what those rights were and in fact I would even argue that we are in the process of defining them even further in these last few years, but we have seldom given life to those rights. By giving life, I mean giving substantive fiscal support in order to fulfill those rights. That is exactly what I believe our government has been doing since taking office in 2015, and that is probably the best way I can sum up where we are going.

The Budget

The two programs that we have seen already, initially in budget 2015 and in our fall economic statement, relate to the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit. They both have profound implications for my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. I will give a glimpse of the benefit that the Canada child benefit has for my riding. Last July alone, we had \$5.754 million given to our families in Scarborough—Rouge Park. It is in fact \$78 million in total last year, which is an astounding number. This benefits families directly in their ability to support their children, to be able to send them to hockey and soccer, to buy food, to buy clothes, and so on. For working people, our policies helped 300,000 Canadian children get out of poverty and that is a very impressive number. The Canada workers benefit has been a very important game-changer. It allows low-income earners while they work to be able to get out of poverty. This budget supports getting 70,000 people out of poverty. Those two benefits are important foundational measures that our government has done.

Let me address three major components of this budget.

First, with respect to women, in 2018 our government recognizes the importance of addressing the issues of gender equality and that it is not only a right but it makes absolute economic sense. We have heard the saying that a country cannot expect to reach its full potential with just half of its population, and that is more true now than ever.

Over the past 40 years, we have increased the participation of women, but they have accounted for only one-third of the economic growth within our country. Canada's women are among the world's most educated. They on average, however, only earn 87¢ on the dollar. This is why we are putting gender at the heart of decision-making in budget 2018. We are working to support women and girls and close the wage gap, policies that will boost economic growth for all Canadians. In budget 2018, we have chosen to lead by example, increasing transparency through pay equity legislation that will ensure all women in federally regulated sectors receive equal pay for work of equal value.

● (1715)

The new “use it or lose it” parental benefits, which provide an additional five weeks of EI parental benefits for primarily men, will again be a very important aspect of our budget.

These benefits will encourage the second parent to share more of the work of raising children and provide greater flexibility for women to return to work sooner, if they so choose.

We have also taken an ambitious step to make Status of Women Canada an official department, with additional funding of \$169 million. This move will support our plan to introduce GBA+ legislation to make gender budgeting a permanent part of the federal budget-making process.

The women's entrepreneurship strategy will be coordinated nationally through an approach that will allow women to move up in the marketplace. The expansive program will include \$33 million in funding for southern Ontario to support women entrepreneurs through the Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario.

This is just the beginning.

I want to address an issue that the House has dealt with a number of times and I have spoken on over the past two and a half years, and that is with respect to indigenous issues.

Recently, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou introduced UNDRIP, legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law. It was augmented by a historic change in attitude and framing of the relationship between indigenous peoples and Canada by the recent announcement of our Prime Minister to move toward a recognition of a rights-based approach.

Our support this year for indigenous issues is in addition to the \$11.8 billion that were part of the previous two budgets. In particular, this year we are setting aside \$337 million for establishing a new fiscal relationship that will strengthen first nations institutions and community capacity to develop a self-government approach.

The department of indigenous affairs will get an additional \$4 billion to address issues such as boil water advisories, first nations child welfare systems, and so on. This is a very important part of our move toward reconciliation, which is long overdue.

Foreign aid is a very important aspect of Canada's footprint in the world. We are known as one of the most humanitarian countries in the world. This past January, I had the opportunity to visit two important areas, where our aid has gone to support a number of initiatives. First I was in Sri Lanka and then Bangladesh to visit the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

Sri Lanka has just ended a 26-year war, has 90,000 Tamil women headed households, and there is a lack of opportunities for women to be in public spaces and offices. Our feminist approach toward foreign aid will assist in ensuring we are able to address some of those systemic barriers for women to take part in public offices.

Similarly, the situation in the Rohingya refugee camps is devastating. Women are the most affected by it. There were \$37.5 million that came there from our government last year.

I hope the \$2 billion historic investment we are making over the next five years toward foreign aid will support additional funding that will go toward women, not only in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, but to other areas where we can have transformational change in societies.

Budget 2018 is about equality and growth, and this is exactly what we are doing. We are reinforcing what the Prime Minister had said, which is to give life to the rights that we have acknowledged exist in our country through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and elsewhere.

● (1720)

Over the next several years, our budget will ensure we build a more just and equitable society in Canada and around the world.

The Budget

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure for me to listen to my colleague's speech, and I give my respects to him and his constituents.

The member and all the other Liberal members were elected on a platform, which is why we are in politics. We propose our services to people. We propose some ideas, sometimes right, sometimes wrong, but at the end of the day, we are elected on a platform.

If I remember, the Liberal platform talked about small deficits. It also talked about a zero deficit in 2019. Could the member give us the exact date when a zero deficit will be achieved by the government?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, we can look at deficits in a number of ways. I look at this as a social deficit that we have had in our country for a number of years. In fact, if we look at the OECD statistics, Canada ranks sixth with respect to social indicators. If we superimpose that with our indigenous population, that rank goes to a staggering and embarrassing 63rd on the list. We are trying to address in part that social deficit with this budget and previous budgets.

With respect to the fiscal deficit my friend talks about, we are walking toward the downward trajectory with respect to the debt to GDP ratio. We are on a very responsible track that balances social needs with economic reality. We have one of the most robust economies in the G7 right now. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. We have created 600,000 jobs since taking office.

We are on the right track toward addressing social and economic deficits.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always enjoyable to listen to my friend. He is a great colleague on the standing committee for aboriginal affairs as well.

Speaking about social deficits in our country, the member is fully aware of the importance of housing in indigenous communities. He was part of the study we did on suicide among young indigenous people. We heard from almost every testimony about housing and the importance of responding to that crisis in aboriginal communities.

The budget provides for \$600 million over three years, which is \$200 million per year for the next three years for on-reserve housing. If we break that down to the some 630 indigenous communities, it amounts to about \$320,000 per community per year. The member knows the cost of construction in the north. That is about one house per community for the next three years. Does he think that is sufficient with respect to housing for indigenous communities?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I find difficult to address is the issue of infrastructure within indigenous communities. In Canada today, in 2018, we are talking about not having a single community with a boil water advisory. Unfortunately, there are a lot of gaps in a lot of areas, including housing where we are behind.

This budget and previous budgets are attempts to close the gap, but we still have a long to go. I agree with my friend that we will

have to get there, but there is still a long way to go. However, these are very important foundational pieces.

• (1725)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a bill was put forward by the Liberal MP for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles on merchant fees. It has been moved 18 times. It is very important that we cap those fees. It took us a long time, two and a half years, for the government to start to honour its commitment to lower the small business tax cut, which was put forward by the late Jack Layton.

The government did nothing on tax havens and protected CEO stock option loopholes. This is a Bay Street budget. There is not a lot in it for small business.

Small business people were expecting that the government would cap merchant fees. It has been delayed 18 times. Could the member speak to what is happening with that bill? Are the Liberals finally going to cap merchant fees and protect small business people?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, this is a mainstream budget. This is a budget that allows people in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park to benefit from the economic growth of our country through the Canada child benefit and other benefits that will allow for a more equitable country.

We have worked hard in the last two and a half years. This, being our third budget, is a great step forward in addressing the structural inequalities that exist in our country. I am very proud of it. I hope my friend opposite will support the budget.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is said that talk is cheap. That is not the case with the government. When it talks, it is very expensive.

Just yesterday, the finance minister spoke for about 40 minutes. During that time, he also, simultaneously, added \$1.5 billion to our national debt. That is either too much talking, too much spending, or both. Either way, there sure is a lot of debt piling up to pay for it.

The Prime Minister promised a small deficit of \$6 billion during the last campaign. It is \$18 billion for this year, three times bigger than he said it would be. He said the deficit would be gone by next year, 2019. Now his finance department has said it will be at least another quarter century of deficits, for a total reaching almost a half a trillion dollars, and that assumes the Liberals do not add any new spending in next year's pre-election budget. How likely is that?

The Liberals have tried to comfort us by saying that we should not worry about growing debt because all of the money that has come in from the growing U.S. economy, the higher oil prices, the booming global economy, will allow us to keep our debt-to-GDP ratio lower than it was before. Let us discuss some of the risks associated with that assumption.

The Budget

The government is ignoring the overall debt that Canadians must shoulder. The debt of the government is the debt of the people. There is no special debt-repayment machine that can service the interest on Canada's national debt, other than the taxpaying entrepreneurs and workers who pay the bills in the country. When it comes to their debt levels, there is very bad news. Canada has the highest levels of household debt-to-income ratios in the OECD. In fact, when we take the corporate, personal, and government debt of Canada and add it together, it is 300% the size of our entire economy, which is, this month, for the first time ever, the biggest in the OECD. We have now surpassed Greece as the most overall indebted people in the entire OECD.

What does that mean? It means that when interest rates go up, our families, our businesses, and our governments will be under a great deal of pressure.

The government has not planned for that eventuality. Rather, it has taken the good fortune it inherited, both in terms of a balanced budget on the day that it walked into the Prime Minister's Office at the Langevin Block and the unusual and almost unnatural coexistence of favourable international economic conditions for Canada. Let me share a few of them that normally do not ever go together.

We have both a low dollar and high oil prices. Oil prices have nearly doubled in the last three years, while the dollar has remained low. Therefore, we have a boost for our western producers, albeit one that is held back by a lack of market access, and a price advantage for our central Canadian manufacturing exporters. Very rarely do those two things simultaneously occur. We have a booming U.S. and world economy, yet we still have low interest rates. Again, those do not typically go together. However, in this very brief window they do.

Unfortunately, it will not stay that way. Already interest rates are going up south of the border. Just since September, the interest rate on the two-year U.S. government bond has nearly doubled, from about 1.2% to about 2.2%. That does not sound like a big deal. However, it means that the cost of borrowing for that government has gone up dramatically.

● (1730)

If bondholders want to lend to government and can get more interest from the government in Washington, they are going to demand more interest from the government in Ottawa. This means that Canadians would pay higher taxes to fund interest payments to those who lend to fund the government.

Simultaneously, interest rates on consumer debt are slowly starting to creep up. Interest rates on mortgage debt are slowly starting to increase. Our businesses will soon have to pay more for the debt they hold as a result of that ongoing phenomenon. The same taxpayers who are struggling under a burden of unprecedented and unmatched personal debt will simultaneously have to shoulder, through their taxation to the government, higher debt interest so that the Prime Minister can fund interest payments to bondholders.

Over the next five years, according to this budget, which is based on, I would suggest, very irresponsible projections over what interest costs will be, the government is going to be spending \$9 billion more

on debt interest in the year 2022 than it is today. Even if we believe those projections, that is an increase in the interest expense of the government of well over 35%. The cost of funding the debt will be \$33 billion per year. That is money taxpayers contribute for which they get literally nothing in return. It goes out the door to lenders who have financed this short-term spending spree by the present-day government.

That assumes that there will be no sudden and unexpected increase in interest rates, which we have every reason to suspect there might be. If the rates go up faster than Finance Canada expects, then those numbers I just shared with the House will actually be an underestimation.

The second risk the government is failing to consider, the first being higher interest rates, is that this budget has left no room to address some of the obvious dangers that are staring all of us in the face. We are in the process of renegotiating a trade agreement with our number one customer. We sell \$400 billion in goods and services to the United States of America, the equivalent of one-fifth of our entire economy. We have a \$2-trillion economy, and we sell \$400 billion to the Americans.

Imagine running a small business and learning that it might be losing its biggest client, who is responsible for one-fifth of all the company's revenue. Would we go out on a big borrowing binge at that moment in time, or would we stabilize our finances and prepare for the eventuality that the client, who has proven to be unpredictable, as is the relationship we currently have with our biggest customer, may no longer be buying our goods in the same numbers it has in the past? There is nothing in this budget to plan for that negative eventuality, even though we all acknowledge, even the government, if it is being honest, that the NAFTA negotiations are going badly and could finish with disastrous consequences for our economy.

We have massive housing bubbles in Toronto and Vancouver, a third danger for which the government is not preparing. If there were a significant correction in housing prices, it would affect the construction industry. It would mean that the net worth of households in those markets would dramatically decline. In some cases, they might be underwater on their mortgages. In other words, their homes could be worth less than the mortgages themselves. All of that would mean a big hit to federal government revenues and to the ability of the government to meet its own obligations, or, more importantly, to provide some relief to those families if such an eventuality were to occur. However, that danger is not accounted for in these numbers either.

● (1735)

It is like the government is assuming that the sunny ways will never be replaced by rainy days. It has done nothing to prepare for that rainy day. Instead of setting aside and squirrelling away our resources to prepare for trouble ahead, the Liberals have blown them in the present. They have spent tomorrow today.

The Budget

That brings me to the final point I want to make on the subject of debt. We just heard a Liberal member across the way talk about social deficits and all these social shortcomings that need to be addressed. Of course, the Liberal solution to that is always more and more government, trickle-down government, the idea that it can scoop up all the tax dollars of the working class and the entrepreneurs. Politicians give it to bureaucrats and bureaucrats to interest groups, or, in the form of corporate welfare, to companies. The hope is that some of this money will trickle back down through the system to the very people who earned it in the first place.

Let us assume that there is a problem with social inequality in this country. How would a larger national debt affect those inequalities? Who holds the bonds in the Government of Canada? Are they the poor people, the suffering, the downtrodden? Are they even the aspiring and struggling working class? Of course not. Bonds in governments are overwhelmingly held by more affluent, and even rich, people. That is why we will always hear international bankers recommending that governments go into deficit. It makes perfect sense for them. They are the ones lending the money and getting the interest. They receive interest payments. The working class pays them. In that sense, debt interest is a wealth transfer. It is a form of redistribution from the working class to the super-rich.

By expanding the national debt, the government is carrying out a massive multi-billion dollar transfer from the have-nots to the have-yachts, from those with the least to those with the most. Once again we see that when government gets big, when the wealth of the nation is concentrated in the state, those with power and influence over the state always win or are always better off.

We on this side of the House of Commons believe in a merit-driven economy, where people get ahead through their hard work, where the free enterprise system allows everyone to do better by making everyone else better, a system where people make decisions with their own money rather than with the money of others.

It is a great irony that our friends across the way, who subscribe to seventies-style central planning, think that people should not be trusted with their own money but that a person should be trusted with other people's money. Who the Liberals want to control other people's money is always them. It is a self-serving and egotistical ideology to which they subscribe.

We on this side subscribe to a view that requires humility of government. We understand that the people who earn the money should keep the money rather than having politicians use the power of coercive taxation to extract it from them and spend it on their behalf. Simply put, as my leader has, we believe in putting people ahead of government in a system in which no one can get ahead except by making people better off by offering them something that is worth more than they had to pay to get it.

That is the free market system, and in reinstating that great free market tradition in this country, not only can we give everyone a chance to succeed but we can replace this notion of a modern-day aristocracy through big government with the notion of a meritocracy through the free market.

• (1740)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and

Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to listen to the member opposite. He is clearly a very humorous presenter in the House. We welcome his rhetorical flourishes.

I would like him to reflect on a couple of things. Three-quarters of the national debt was generated by two Conservative prime ministers. They outdid everyone else. On debt, they really overachieved. I am curious as to whether the member is considering resigning from the party as a result of that horrid financial record.

The other thing I am really curious to have him flesh out and provide some more detail on is the notion of the housing market suddenly correcting in places like Vancouver, a situation none of us wants to see. The Conservatives talked about the enormous financial responsibility of a federal government to bail out individual homeowners. Is it the Conservatives' policy now to protect individual home prices for every single Canadian? Is that part of their fiscal plan for the future? Is that really what they are promising as a result of what they have heard in the budget?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, let us address the first question, on the culpability of Canada's national debt. I believe if the hon. member looks back on the record, the largest share of our national debt would be rung up by one family. Consider that for a few moments. Secondly—

An hon. member: Who would that be?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I would rather not say the name because that family has a member in the House of Commons these days and it would be unparliamentary for me to name him. However, I believe that family has done more to build up Canada's national debt and thereby enrich the wealthy bondholders who collect interest on it than anyone else. I am sure that family gets regular Christmas cards from those bondholders, thanking them for all of that debt.

The member wants to talk about the housing market. No, we do not believe in bailouts. In fact, we have taken the opposite position. The Liberals want to bring in a bailout system through the infrastructure bank, which would require taxpayers to bail out large corporate construction investors in the event that their projects go belly-up. We are not the party of bailouts; they are the party of bailouts.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this budget sure does not look like the main-street budget that the government was calling for. It looks like the Bay Street budget. In fact, the Liberals failed to follow through with their promise to close CEO stock option loopholes costing Canadians almost a billion dollars, and tax havens are costing upward of \$11 billion. We are talking about \$12 billion that could have gone to really important initiatives.

Private Members' Business

My friend from Carleton talked about people who are struggling to make ends meet, people who are hard-working, and how we can make life better for them. Twenty-one years ago, the Liberal government talked about creating a pharmacare plan. Here we are, and they are talking about creating a plan to create a plan to create a pharmacare plan. That is not good enough. We know that we are the only country in the world with a universal health care plan that does not have a pharmacare plan. In fact, CBC reported last night that we are spending about \$158 per person on medicine. In New Zealand, where they have a plan, it is \$23 per person per annum. Maybe the member can speak about whether the Conservatives support a pharmacare plan. I am sure he has knocked on doors where people are making the tough decision of whether they are going to buy food or medicine.

● (1745)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, this is something I have thought a lot about. We have in this country different provincial programs that offer drug plans to people who are of limited means. Some of them require that people be on social assistance. Others, like in British Columbia, are phased out very gradually as people earn more income. There is no doubt that in many provinces the clawbacks of drug benefits, of housing benefits, and of social assistance combined with taxation create marginal effective tax rates on the poorest people that can often exceed 100%. That is, for every extra dollar they earn, they actually lose more than a dollar. This is a particularly pernicious problem for people with disabilities.

That is why I have introduced the opportunity for workers with disabilities act, which would require the finance minister to do an assessment every year of how much people with disabilities are losing for every dollar they earn, and if they are losing more than gaining, then the minister would be required to introduce measures through the working income tax benefit, the disability tax credit, or others in order to redress that problem. It would further create a condition in the Canadian social transfer program that provinces do the same because we must all agree that work should always pay more and we should reward people for making the courageous decision to work.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance in his speech said, "Canada leads all the other [group of seven] countries in economic growth". That is not an accurate reflection of what is actually happening on the ground. It is not an accurate reflection of what ordinary Canadians feel. It is not an accurate reflection of the growth that actually matters to the constituents we represent here on the floor of the House of Commons.

Here is why. The GDP growth numbers that the government used in the budget do not take into account population growth, and Canada has one of the most rapidly growing populations in the G7 and in the OECD. In 2016, we had 1.2% population growth. If a country has 5% GDP growth but it has 6% population growth, it actually has declining per capita incomes and increasing poverty. Therefore, with a 1.2% population growth, here are the per capita GDP numbers based on the budget: in 2018, 1%; in 2019, 0.4%; and in 2020, 0.5%.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right. What actually matters to the well-being of any country is not

simply the top line economic growth, but the per capita growth, because that is the amount of money in which all of the members of the country can share.

The government has been trumpeting last year's growth numbers, while failing to acknowledge that the vast majority of the causes for the growth are transient and temporary. One is that oil prices have basically doubled since 2014. Oil is roughly 6% of our economy. If we double the price of oil, members can imagine how that could influence the overall growth in the economy. We continue to have a sugar high from the overpriced housing sector, which is fuelled largely by debt. Finally, the American economy has been roaring, something that might not necessarily be to our advantage if NAFTA falls apart, or if the American economy decides to stumble again.

Those are all transient short-term benefits, and that is why the government ought to have done the responsible thing and used the resulting revenue boost to strengthen our foundation for the storm that may be coming at any time. Instead, the government has blown that fortune and left Canada more vulnerable than ever to risk.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:49 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1750)

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.) moved that Bill S-210, an act to amend an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak to Bill S-210.

Bill S-210 is a straightforward piece of legislation. It proposes to repeal the short title found in section 1 of Bill S-7, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts. The only thing that is affected through Bill S-210 is the removal of the short title.

Bill S-210 was introduced by Senator Mobina Jaffer and, having passed third reading in the other place, is now before this House for consideration and debate.

Private Members' Business

Bill S-7 received royal assent on June 18, 2015, with the short title of “Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act”. It is this short title that the bill before us today proposes to repeal.

As my colleagues may be aware, the act that we are proposing to amend today strengthened efforts to prevent early and forced marriage and to better protect and support vulnerable Canadians, particularly immigrant women and girls. Bill S-7 also inappropriately and unnecessarily paired the words “barbaric” and “cultural” so as to suggest that practices such as forced marriages and polygamy were rooted in cultures external to Canada. In reality, Canada is faced with many of the issues which Bill S-7 sought to address irrespective of any particular culture. Ultimately, the use of the phrase “barbaric cultural practices” was used by the previous Conservative government as a tool of division, and we are presented with an opportunity and I might say even a duty to fix this.

As Senator Jaffer stated, “What this title implies is simply the recompartamentalizing of things that are already illegal in Canada to attempt to reframe it as though a specific culture promotes these practices and, therefore, to claim that the culture is barbaric.”

During the parliamentary review process, stakeholders, senators, members of Parliament, committee witnesses, and the media criticized the short title. Stakeholders as diverse as the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children and the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic opposed the short title stating that it would create divisions within Canadian society by targeting certain communities.

Avvy Go, the director of the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, stated during her testimony to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that the title “invokes racist stereotypes and fuels xenophobia toward certain racialized communities”. She further went on to say that it “detracts from Canadians having a real and honest discussion about domestic violence and from seeing domestic violence for what it really is, namely, an issue of gender inequality and not an issue of cultural identity”.

Further, representatives from the Canadian Bar Association and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants raised similar concerns about the divisiveness of the short title. Noted immigration lawyer Chantal Desloges also stated that the short title “deters citizens from engaging in meaningful discussion of the bill’s actual content”. Dr. Rupaleem Bhuyan, a professor at the University of Toronto’s faculty of social work, also pointed out at committee hearings that the title is “misleading from the serious issues that this bill seeks to address”, and recommended instead attention on promoting gender equality, which is something this government has high on our issues of importance.

Former minister of immigration, refugees, and citizenship, the Hon. John McCallum, who was the Liberal immigration critic during debate on Bill S-7, spoke to the bill’s short title in the previous Parliament. On the use of the word “cultural” he said:

That word is both offensive and unnecessary. We on this side of the House agree that these practices are barbaric, so we do not object at all to the use of that word. When one inserts the word “cultural”, it carries the implication that there are certain cultures, certain communities that are being targeted. Whether that is in the minds of the Conservatives is something we can debate, but it certainly carries that implication across the country. There is no reason to force that implication to be carried, because

as has been pointed out, in terms of polygamy and other barbaric practices, they are certainly not limited to any one community.

He further went on to express:

I do not think the word “cultural” adds anything. It certainly does not add anything to the content of this bill, and it is misleading in that it carries the implication in the minds of some Canadians that this bill is targeting their particular culture or community.

• (1755)

These are just a few examples of voices that spoke out about the short title. As you can see, many individuals and organizations share similar sentiments.

In fact, Mr. McCallum had proposed an amendment to the bill at committee stage that would have seen the word “cultural” removed from its title. The amendment was rejected.

Even Senator Salma Ataullahjan, the original sponsor of Bill S-7, supports removal of the short title. As she put it during debate at third reading:

When I spoke to Bill S-210 at second reading, I affirmed my strong support of Bill S-7 and its intent. However, I also fervently expressed my opposition to its short title, which, in my view, is incendiary and deeply harmful, as it targets a cultural group as a whole rather than individuals who commit the specific acts.

The inappropriate pairing of “barbaric” and “cultural” in order to fuel racist and xenophobic attitudes is not who we are as Canadians. Quite frankly, these attitudes and the impressions that this short title perpetuates have no place in Canadian society.

The phrase “barbaric cultural practices” was used by the former Conservative government to divide Canadians. As were many Canadians, I too was disgusted when the Conservatives announced their so-called barbaric cultural practices hotline, which was a thinly veiled attempt to appeal to the worst in Canadians, an attempt to sow fear of others that would have had Canadians snitching on one another.

This is not who we are as Canadians. We have heard that clearly from Canadians. Such practices are not healthy for democracy. They result in divisiveness and mistrust, and perpetuate discrimination and intolerance.

Today, we have an opportunity to fix an expression of these attitudes in the form of Bill S-7’s short title. I am hopeful that all members in this place will join me in supporting the repeal of the short title. Bill S-210 reflects our commitment to openness, acceptance, and generosity in Canada’s immigration policies. It reflects our commitment to common sense, and a Canada that does not purposely use inaccurate and inflammatory language to divide us. Of course, it also reflects our commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals in Canada, particularly women and children.

As the Prime Minister has said on numerous occasions, diversity is our strength. Canadians understand this. We know that Canada has succeeded, culturally, politically, and economically, because of our diversity, not in spite of it. Diversity has been and will continue to be at the heart of our success and of what we offer the world.

Private Members' Business

The success of immigrants is our success as a strong and united country. As the member of Parliament for Cloverdale—Langley City, I am proud to represent a diverse and inclusive population. Our communities are home to Christians and Sikhs, Buddhists and Muslims, first nations and newcomers.

Canada is a modern nation rooted in principles of multiculturalism and diversity. At our core we understand that our different backgrounds, beliefs, and heritage truly make us stronger. They contribute to a cultural tapestry that enhances our collective identity and signals to the world that Canada is an open and welcoming nation.

Canada is a nation of newcomers, and we know that when newcomers succeed, Canada succeeds. I am proud to be a member of a government which welcomed over 40,000 Syrian newcomers during one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time. In this act, we demonstrated leadership on the world stage as a progressive, inclusive nation. Resettling refugees is a proud and important part of Canada's humanitarian tradition. It reflects our commitment to Canadians and demonstrates to the world that we have a shared responsibility to help people who are displaced and persecuted.

To play different religious, ethnic, or cultural groups off of one another is simply wrong. It is reflective of a style of politics that Canadians soundly rejected in the last election. Conflating abhorrent practices like polygamy with particular cultures does a disservice to the inclusive and welcoming attitudes that we as Canadians work hard to foster. It inaccurately suggests that these practices are ascribed to particular cultures.

As Senator Jaffer has said, "We can call terrorists barbaric, we can call violence barbaric, but we cannot call cultures barbaric."

Our words matter, and in this place, they have consequences with implications resonating across our country. The words we use reflect our intentions and the type of nation we want to build as Canadians, as well as a reflection of what we offer to the world.

● (1800)

The strength of our new Canadians is what makes us stronger, and we must be vigilant that our actions and words reflect the openness that our country is known for.

Bill S-210 is straightforward. It would remove a short title that was seen as promoting division and intolerance, and as targeting specific communities. There are no substantive changes to any of the legislation. It is simply the removal of the short title.

I truly encourage all my hon. colleagues to support the bill and to work together to foster an open, generous, tolerant, and inclusive Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is high time this work were done. We just came out of debate on budget 2018. In the budget, there was mention of a need for a national action plan to combat racial discrimination and all forms of religious discrimination. To that end, there will be a consultation process the government will embark on. I would like to ask the member whether he would agree that we need to have a timeline on the consultation so we can actually get to the action part of the issue, which is to fight systemic discrimination and all forms of religious discrimination.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her advocacy for immigrant communities and those who are disenfranchised in Canadian society. She poses an excellent question. We do want to move to action as quickly as possible. There are issues in society. I am really pleased to see that our budget has committed support to move us forward. I agree that we need to get through the planning and exploration stages as quickly as possible so we can get to the action and help those in need, and advance the very cause she spoke about in her question.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City was not in the 41st Parliament, where I argued vigorously against this bill. This was not a piece of legislation. The title was a bumper sticker in search of a problem. What the legislation did, from start to finish, was redundant to existing laws.

In this very place, I can recall asking why we would pass a law like the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act. The minister at the time was Chris Alexander. He would thump his desk and say that he was appalled that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands would not speak out against mercy killings. Mercy killings have been illegal forever. It is called murder.

The things that are in this bill are things that were already illegal. I would urge us to remove the short title, but further, I would ask us to repeal the entire bill.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her work during the last Parliament in trying to bring some reason to the debate that was happening at that time. I know many Canadians were horrified by the actions and words put forward. It really was divisive. As a Canadian who was outside politics at the time, I was horrified with the kind of conversation that was being advanced through the House of Commons.

We have an opportunity to do it right. Bill S-210 is the first step. It would remove the short title, which really is inflammatory and serves no purpose.

● (1805)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for an excellent and very thoughtful speech, and for making the important point of uncoupling inappropriate actions from specific cultures.

The last member who spoke brought up the budget. I wonder if he could comment on the increase for multiculturalism to help promote groups with each other.

We just had a multiculturalism group meeting in my riding last year. They were all so excited to be together, and they want to do it again. They are part of the solution. I hope everyone in the House uses the various multicultural groups who want to work together and diffuse any tensions there might be in Canada. That is why it is such a great country.

Private Members' Business

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I agree that the investments in multiculturalism our government made in the budget this week are a continued reflection of the importance that Canada's diversity offers. It is the strength of our country. Investing in this and celebrating it would help us find inclusiveness, not the divisiveness we saw through previous legislation that we are attempting to amend and fix through Bill S-210.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-210, an act to amend an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

The bill we are debating today does nothing but change the short title of the bill that was passed in Parliament a year ago. Let us think about that for a moment. We are debating a bill which its entire purpose is to delete a short title.

When I went door-knocking in 2015, not a single person said that they hoped I could go to Ottawa so I could spend my time debating the changing of a title of a bill. Anyone listening to this debate will probably wonder why Parliament has chosen to spend debate time, committee study time, and so many other aspects of its resources on a bill that does so little.

I could spend my time arguing that this is becoming a hallmark of the Liberal government. It spends far more time, effort, and Canadian taxpayers on gestures rather than taking concrete actions to address challenges facing Canadians. Yesterday's budget is a perfect example of that.

Instead, I will set the context for the reason why Bill S-7 in the last Parliament was necessary and then review the concrete measures that the bill enacted to protect Canadians.

The bill was put forward by our former Conservative government to take action to prevent forced marriage and the so-called honour killings. A British website describes forced marriage as taking place when the bride, groom, or both do not want to get married but are forced by others, usually their families. People forced into marriage may be tricked into going abroad, physically threatened, and/or emotionally blackmailed to do so. Forced marriage is wrong and cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis. It is a form of violence and/or child abuse and it is a violation of human rights.

Forced marriage also often involves children and young girls. Child marriage often compromises a girl's development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement, and placing her at increased risk of domestic violence.

In June 2017, a Canadian woman named Samra Zafar gave her account to CTV news on why it was so important for us to take action to prevent forced marriage in Canada. I am going to share her story from the article.

She said she was just 16 years old when her mother told her she would be marrying a 28-year-old man in Canada. Think about that, 16 years old and being forced into marriage with a 28-year-old. Against her wishes, Zafar left her Pakistani family's home in the United Arab Emirates and started a new life with her husband in Mississauga.

Over the next decade, she said she endured abuse of all kinds as she raised two daughters and tried desperately to obtain a university degree so she could get out of her marriage. She eventually succeeded and is now speaking out about other child brides and forced marriage, a problem she says is prevalent, even in Canada.

Zafar said, "It's actually shocking how much it happens here... Since I have started speaking up about it, I get approached by women and girls all the time."

Forcing very young girls into marriage is a serious global problem. In Canada, marriage laws vary among provinces and territories, with the legal age of marriage generally set at 18. However, in many provinces, a person with consent from both parents can be married at age 16 or 17.

Saadya Hamdani of Plan Canada said, "Those exceptions can lead to forced marriage because the bride's consent is not explicitly sought...The cultural value that is attached to marriage is a very big problem."

It is estimated that each year 15 million girls around the world are married before the age of 18. In September 2013, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario released a report that counted 219 confirmed or suspected cases of forced marriage in Ontario and Quebec in just two years. In 57% of the cases, people were taken out of Canada to get married.

As Canadians, we are moving toward a space of true equality of persons. This means freedom of choice for individuals. It means protecting the vulnerable. It means working toward a Canada where men and women are not forced into situations that result in a lifetime of harm and devastation.

Our former Conservative government knew that Canada was not immune to this issue and took concrete action to help prevent this from happening with Bill S-7. It was created to protect vulnerable men and women from the cultural practices of forced marriage, to protect them from the many consequences such as mental health issues, sexual assault, verbal and emotional abuse, and many others.

To give an overview of the original Bill S-7, I want to highlight a few of the key components.

We amended the existing offence for a legally authorized officiant who knowingly solemnized a marriage contrary to provincial law. To clarify that, this also includes a marriage that was contrary to federal law, including a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16.

● (1810)

We created a new offence prohibiting the active and knowing participation in a forced marriage ceremony by any person, including parents or other family members of the person being forced to marry, or the performance of a forced marriage ceremony, whether or not the person is legally authorized to solemnize a marriage.

Private Members' Business

We created a new offence prohibiting the active and knowing participation in a marriage ceremony involving a person under the age of 16 by any person, including parents or other family members of the person who is underage, or the performance of an underage marriage ceremony, whether or not the person is legally authorized to solemnize a wedding.

We also extended the existing offence of removing a child from Canada for the purpose of having certain offences committed abroad to include the removal of a child for the purpose of a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16 outside of Canada.

We introduced a new peace bond that gives the court power to impose conditions on a person when there are reasonable grounds to fear that a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16 will otherwise occur.

Bill S-7 also amended the Criminal Code to address concerns that the defence of provocation has been raised in several so-called honour killings in Canada. These cases involved accused persons who killed their wife, sister, or sister's fiancé and alleged that the killing was motivated by their perception that the victims had brought dishonour to their family through their conduct or choices, taking into account their cultural views about appropriate gender roles and behaviour.

Prior to Bill S-7, the defence of provocation allowed persons to commit first-degree murder but seek the more lenient charge of manslaughter by arguing that the victim's conduct provoked them to lose self-control and commit the murder. Prior to Bill S-7, any conduct by the victim, including insults and other forms of offensive behaviour that are lawful, could potentially qualify as provocation if it was found to be sufficient to cause an ordinary person to lose control, if the accused was not expecting it, and if the killing was sudden. Bill S-7 limited the defence of provocation so that the lawful conduct by victims that might be perceived by the accused as an insult, or offend that person or that person's sense of family honour or reputation, could not be used to reduce murder to manslaughter.

From an immigration point of view, the original bill ensures that all who are vulnerable to forced marriage will be protected, from those who are newest to our country to those who are born in Canada.

The fact that the Liberals just want to change the name of the bill but not change any form or substance of the bill affirms that they agree with our previous Conservative government's approach to Bill S-7.

All these changes are common sense and have the potential to save lives, which is what the Liberal government should be spending its time doing. However, the bill we are debating today is another example of the government wasting time while trying to appear progressive through the amendment of a bill made by the Conservatives.

The bill before us today, Bill S-210, does nothing to help solve serious societal problems created by forced marriages and so-called honour killings. Instead, it could be argued that it seeks to distort public understanding of the severity of the impact of issues such as forced marriage and so-called honour killings, by arguing over how harshly we should denounce these practices.

These are typical Liberal tactics, placing before the rights of victims the feelings of those who hold the abhorrent attitude that practices such as these are tolerable. That is why our previous Conservative government put in place Bill S-7 to protect vulnerable Canadians, yet here is the priority of the Liberal government, standing here arguing semantics instead of discussing real change to prevent crimes like forced marriage from happening. How reprehensible. How very Liberal.

● (1815)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill S-210. This bill has quite a long, full title, but seeks to do just one small thing, an important thing, which is to repeal the short title of former Bill S-7.

My New Democrat colleagues and I wholeheartedly support this initiative. Words matter, and when crafting legislation in this place, they matter even more. The words members of this place use, and the words used to craft the laws of a country, set a tone and an example for Canadians. We must always keep that responsibility in mind, and we must always take it very seriously.

I was glad to see Senator Jaffer take on this initiative, encouraged by the broad support it received in the Senate, and happy that the member for Cloverdale—Langley City sponsored this bill in the House of Commons.

Choosing to title Bill S-7 the “Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act” was just that, an intentional choice. This choice was one New Democrats saw at the time as irresponsible at best and dangerous dog-whistle politics at worst. The NDP attempted to change this title during Bill S-7's committee study, but the former Conservative government's minister of immigration had already announced that he would not consider any amendments to the bill.

It is with great privilege that I have held the role as NDP critic for immigration, refugees, and citizenship, as well as multiculturalism, and it is through my time in these roles that I have had the opportunity to understand just how important small initiatives like repealing this inappropriate short title are.

Today, we are faced with a global migration crisis. The United Nations estimates there are over 65 million people forcibly displaced, a level not seen since World War II. Not only are the humanitarian actions we, as Canadians, take to address these global challenges important, but so too are the words we use when discussing it. At the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, many European nations were closing their doors to asylum seekers fleeing a brutal civil war. Anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, and anti-Muslim rhetoric had truly taken hold in some places. This was pushed in many corners by far-right nationalist political movements. They discredited the idea of the Syrians fleeing this war, one where we have seen intentional targeting of civilians with barrel bombs and chemical weapons, as economic migrants trying to jump the queue. The rhetoric was effective.

Private Members' Business

As I have said in the House before, I was shocked to read the quote from our own Prime Minister on November 23 when he took that rhetoric regarding the irregular bordering crossing situation, stating that would-be Canadians needed more than just a desire for a better economic future if they expected to be granted refugee status in this country. Words matter.

Given the rise globally in anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric, as Canadians and especially as parliamentarians, we must do more than just rest on our humanitarian laurels to prevent these ideas from taking hold here. Canada has thus far gone against the trend and we need to work hard to keep it that way. This is important because not only does it shape how we respond to those outside our borders, but how we treat members of our own communities.

I was troubled to see that police-reported hate crimes in Canada continued to rise from 2015 to 2016. In 2016, there were over 1,400 hate crimes reported to police, and 48% of those were motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity. The short title of Bill S-7 shamefully attempted to reframe crimes committed by individuals as normal practices of so-called barbaric cultures. At the time Bill S-7 was tabled, many Canadians saw this as being targeted towards Muslim Canadians.

In my opinion, it was also clear during the Canadian heritage committee's study of systemic racism and religious discrimination that there is a clear segment of our society that is continuing the push to denigrate the culture and heritage of Muslim Canadians. I believe this can unfortunately be seen in our hate crime statistics too.

• (1820)

In 2016, Arab or west Asian Canadians were the target of 112 hate crimes and Muslim Canadians were the target of 139 hate crimes. Combined, this represents 18% of all police reported hate crimes.

While I and my colleagues support Bill S-210, we believe there is much more to be done. Words matter but so do actions.

Coming out of the heritage committee study, New Democrats supported the report tabled in the House and its recommendations for taking action against systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia. However, we believed still more could be done. As the NDP representative, I tabled a supplementary report, containing an additional 29 recommendations aimed toward making Canada a more just, fair, and inclusive place.

I was pleased to see in the budget tabled yesterday, a commitment and a recognition for a new national anti-racism plan and a plan to deal with religious discrimination. However, I was disappointed that once again the government was merely committing to consultation.

Words matter but so do actions.

The heritage committee met 22 times over the course of that study, hearing from 78 witnesses, receiving countless written submissions, tabling a 130-page report. The report's first four recommendations outlined how to get moving on a renewed national action plan with a timeline, resources, and measurable outcomes. I hope this consultation process is not going to be a long drawn out one. I hope at the end of the process it will yield a concrete plan that is resourced.

We have seen time and again a pattern of behaviour from the government. It likes to consult but the follow up, not so much.

We have seen that movie played out with electoral reform, which Canadians overwhelming have said they wanted a system where every vote counts. The government decided to ignore all that good advice and the Prime Minister made a unilateral decision to break his own promise to Canadians that the 2015 election would be the last first past the post election.

Worst still, the Prime Minister thumbed his nose at Canadians who participated in the many town halls that many MPs held in their communities and the extensive consultation process on which an all-party committee embarked. Members will excuse me if I am just a little skeptical whenever the government says that it will consult.

We heard loud and clear during the study about the rise of hate crime incidents in Canada. Witnesses said that immediate action should be taken to provide improved training and education to Canada's law enforcement agencies to better understand and recognize when hate was a motivating factor in the commission of a crime. We need to ensure that provinces and territories are resourced with proper hate crime units. The government could do this now. Action matters.

We also heard about under-reporting of hate crime incidents to authorities, often out of fear by victims that they would not be taken seriously. Under-reporting of hate crime incidents is a known fact. The government needs to ensure barriers are removed for victims to come forward. Resourcing a hotline in collaboration with community groups would have done just that. However, that was not part of budget 2018.

Canadians do not want to see victims of hate crime and systemic discrimination to continue to suffer silently. Action matters.

What we also know is that hate is a learned behaviour. We must do more as a society to counter those who teach and promote hate and division.

Given the current climate and the increase in hateful and anti-immigrant rhetoric across the developed world, Canada cannot rest on its laurels when it comes to diversity and inclusion. To ensure that Canada continues to go against those trends, investments must be made in our newcomer communities to ensure they can integrate successfully and thrive. We need to build on the hard work of community groups by investing and supporting organizations that work to strengthen community involvement, civic inclusion, and to develop community leaders. Action matters.

Let us get on with it, with love and courage.

Private Members' Business

•(1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening in support of Bill S-210, which seeks to repeal the short title of Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act.

The purpose of the bill that we are proposing to amend is to prevent early and forced marriage. It also seeks to better protect and support vulnerable Canadians, especially immigrant women and girls.

However, the short title of Bill S-7 has been harshly criticized by stakeholders, senators, members of the House of Commons, witnesses called to appear before committee, and the media. These groups argue that the short title could divide Canadian society by targeting certain communities. At issue is the use of the adjective “barbaric” in the short title of Bill S-7.

Our government believes that it is an inflammatory word that could be quite divisive. Its use could instill fear of certain immigrant groups and divert attention from the main purpose of the bill, which is to protect all women, regardless of their cultural origins.

As a result, people in Canada who defend the rights of victims of forced marriage are calling for this amendment. They believe that the bill should have a more neutral title that reflects the bill's content, rather than one that is emotionally charged.

Some people have pointed out that the title could prevent Canadians from having a truly honest discussion on family violence. Others have criticized the title because it prevents meaningful discussion on the actual content of the bill. Major concerns about the title have been raised by many individuals and organizations.

Our government's support for Bill S-210 demonstrates our commitment to the values of openness, tolerance, and generosity in the Canadian immigration system. It demonstrates our commitment to accuracy and to avoiding terminology that could be seen as misleading, inflammatory, or divisive. Finally, it demonstrates our commitment to protecting vulnerable people in Canada, particularly women and children.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship often say that Canada values diversity and has succeeded culturally, politically, and economically because of our diversity, not in spite of it. This diversity is key to our success and to what we offer to the world.

The short title of Bill S-7 refers to practices that are already illegal in Canada and tries to present them in a new way that implies that one culture in particular promotes those practices and is therefore barbaric. That is inappropriate.

The adjective “barbaric” conjures up images from the colonial era, when the word “barbarian” was used in a negative way to describe some people from other cultures who were seen as strange and uncivilized.

When one culture feels a sense of moral superiority over another, it only serves to divide our society. That feeling fuels xenophobia and is destructive, particularly in this era of growing globalization.

Barbaric acts are not restricted to any one culture, race, ethnicity, or gender. Violence is not perpetrated solely on women who belong to particular cultures, which is why such actions are already illegal in Canada. The bill's short title should be amended because it presents violent acts in a way that suggests certain specific cultures promote them and that those cultures are therefore barbaric.

Keeping the short title affects how Canadians' attitudes and our work as legislators are perceived. This kind of title suggests once again that we should focus only on certain communities rather than fight violence wherever it may be.

I would like to see members of Parliament excise such insinuations from the wording of our laws. As elected representatives, it is our duty not to perpetuate misguided notions and hostile language that can influence Canadian society.

The success of newcomers from diverse backgrounds who settle in Canada contributes to our success as a strong, united country. However, we must take care that the language we use, especially the language we use to describe our laws, reflects the openness for which Canada is known the world over.

In closing, our government supports Bill S-210 to repeal the short title of the act, which may be perceived as promoting division and intolerance by targeting certain communities. That is why our government supports Bill S-210.

•(1830)

I encourage my hon. colleagues to support it too.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.):

[*Member spoke in Cree*]

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate Bill S-210 in the House this evening.

[*English*]

This bill would repeal the title of Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act. We need to go back in time to 2014 and 2015, when former minister Chris Alexander decided that he wanted to do wedge politics and divide Canadians, to push people to the side and create a society where we focus on only a small number of our fellow citizens. It was divide and conquer. That is not the type of politics we need in our country. We need to bring people together to work with communities.

This bill is extremely important, because it would correct egregious harm that has been done to many cultural communities in our country. It was introduced in December 2015, shortly after our government came to power. It was introduced by Senator Mobina Jaffer. In a speech introducing her bill, which would do nothing more than remove the title of the law, Senator Jaffer said that the use of the term barbaric is an insult to cultures in Canada. She said:

Private Members' Business

Can we reasonably call terrorists barbaric? Yes. Are certain acts against humanity barbaric? Yes. Would any reasonable person agree with these points? Yes. Do I agree with those points? Yes.

The issue here, frankly, is the pairing of the words “barbaric” and “cultural.” By pairing these two words, we are instead removing the agency from the individual committing an action that is clearly wrong and associating it instead with the cultural group at large.

We are implying that these practices are part of cultures and that these cultures are barbaric. We have heard this all too often in our country before. Think of “the savage” and “the uncivilized”, where we demonize the other. Instead of looking for ways we can build a common understanding and look at other viewpoints, we demonize the other and push them to the side, push them to the edge of our country, push them to the edge of Canada.

An *National Post* article said:

...there is some cross-partisan consensus on the law's title. Conservative Sen. Salma Attaullahjan agrees with Senator Jaffer that “barbaric” is a problematic word. The short title “in my view, is incendiary and deeply harmful as it targets a cultural group as a whole rather than individuals who commit specific acts,” Attaullahjan said [in a] Monday evening [debate] in the Senate.

“Through conversations with my community, I heard from most that they felt the short title was directed solely at them and that from their perspective it served only to further stigmatize and alienate them from the community at large.”

I have also spoken to members of my community in Winnipeg Centre. There are many cultural groups that feel stigmatized by the use of this title, which they believe is a use of wedge politics that pushes people to the edge. This obviously is not right, and this is not who we are and should be as Canadians. We must be better.

I am very proud of the government, which is committed to addressing gender-based violence and protecting the most vulnerable. Our government has taken deliberate and tangible action toward this goal, as in our budget 2018, with pay equity and ensuring that we have gender-based analysis. I also believe that our government is deeply committed to promoting inclusion and acceptance, which are some of the key pillars of Canadian society.

While Bill S-7 was aimed at strengthening protection for women and girls, the reference to barbaric cultural practices in the title creates divisions, promotes harmful stereotypes, and fuels intolerance by targeting specific cultural communities. It has been perceived as offensive and incendiary by certain communities and stakeholder groups that serve immigrants, as it targets cultural groups as a whole rather than individuals who commit specific illegal acts.

• (1835)

When I was in the army, I had the opportunity of attending a junior leadership course, which is now named the practical leadership course, back in 2000. In this course, we learned about the principles of leadership. We learned how to be a better leader. One of the things we talked about was to never punish the entire group for the actions of one individual, but to correct the actions of that individual and to make sure to build morale in the group, for when we attack the entire group for no apparent reason, it becomes arbitrary and it does destroy the morale of the unit that we are in. People in the army, most if not all, believe in a better Canada and are representative of Canadian society. These rules can apply equally to what we do in government.

This inflammatory language, in my opinion, detracts from the substance of the bill and takes the focus away from the discussion of real problems and looking for real solutions. Let us be clear about this. Violence against women takes many different forms and affects millions of women and girls in Canada and around the world, regardless of religion, nationality, or culture. Repealing this title is a symbolic step but one that carries real meaning and consequence. Language matters.

This change is in line with what our government is attempting to do, building on openness, diversity, and inclusion. In the last election, Canadians rejected the Conservatives' dog-whistle politics, their divisive tactics, their stigmatizing of different communities, and their ill-fated ideas like the barbaric cultural practices hotline, with 1-800-barbaric-cultures or 1-800-barbaric-peoples. Diversity is our strength. We know that Canada has succeeded culturally, politically, and economically because of our diversity, not in spite of it.

I support Bill S-210, as do the people of my community of Winnipeg Centre. We support Bill S-210. This is important.

I would like to reiterate what Bill S-7 was about, which was passed under the previous government. It was passed in 2015 and sought to address such issues as early and forced marriage, polygamy, and domestic violence. The act amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act, and the Criminal Code to strengthen existing inadmissibility provisions by adding new inadmissibility for practising polygamy in Canada, codify existing requirements for consent and monogamy in marriage, set a new minimum standard national age for marriage, and strengthen the Criminal Code offences related to early and forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence.

The Liberals supported Bill S-7 but argued against the terminology in the bill of “barbaric cultural practices” and noted that the bill targeted practices that were already against the law. However, the government of the day missed the opportunity with Bill S-7 to address these issues in a more tangible manner. At the committee stage, the opposition critic at the time, the good John McCallum, my good friend, proposed an amendment that we remove the word “cultural” from the title, noting that if the title were perceived as an attack on many communities and it did more harm than good, then perhaps we should look at a different title. The amendment was defeated, unfortunately.

Numerous stakeholders have expressed strong concerns about the use of the words “barbaric cultural practices”, arguing that they stigmatize communities and create divisions while doing nothing to help address real issues. Stakeholders who have commented in opposition to the bill's title include the Canadian Bar Association, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, and the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, among others.

Let us fight for inclusiveness. Let us build bridges. Let us build understanding. Let us fight for all Canadians, not just those who we believe are our friends but truly all Canadians, for we are all in this together.

[Member spoke in Cree]

Private Members' Business

● (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to my colleague's bill, and to recognize the fine work the senator has done in regard to an important issue. Ultimately, through the Senate, we have a private member's bill that is definitely worthy of supporting.

It will be interesting to see how the Conservatives position themselves on this issue. At the time, when the legislation was brought in, there was quite a significant uproar from the opposition benches.

I had the privilege of serving as the immigration and citizenship critic for the Liberal Party when we were in the third party. I often had the opportunity to go to the citizenship standing committee and work, particularly with one minister, Jason Kenney, when he was the minister responsible for immigration, and to a much lesser extent, Chris Alexander, prior to taking more of a full-time role in the House leadership team. During that period, I learned a great deal about the importance of cross-cultural awareness and of the different types of wording we used, whether it was in addressing a group of people or, as in this case, in addressing legislation that was brought forward by the Conservative government.

I can remember when the government of the day would bring in these pieces of legislation. We would wonder how the bills got their names. This is an excellent example of what the government brought forward.

When the government brought in this legislation, a great deal of resistance and outrage came not only from the opposition benches but also from many different stakeholders. It offended a good number of people.

I appreciate the comments of my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, to the degree that the Conservatives were prepared to push all that criticism to the side in order to generate what we believed at the time to be a wedge issue. The naming of the bill was just not called for, and it did not need that name.

To emphasize how dramatic it was, the bill was titled, "Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act". I am sure *Hansard* will show that I stood in my place and opposed the legislation, and for good reason. I listened to what people had said. There was no changing the course for the government. It was absolutely determined.

I believed back then, as many members of the opposition did, as well as many different stakeholders, that the Conservative government was using it for one reason, the vote. It believed that by creating this wedge issue, by trying to use a title, through a fear factor of sorts, it would convince individuals to vote for the Conservatives.

The Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Green Party, and even the Bloc opposed what the Conservatives brought forward. The Conservatives genuinely believed they would be able to show how wonderful they were in protecting the rights of individuals, by using a twisted title of this nature, not realizing or, worse case scenario, realizing they were offending so many others. They just did not care about that.

When I heard that one of my colleagues was bringing this legislation forward, I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to share a few thoughts.

● (1845)

It is important to recognize that we are also deeply committed to promoting inclusion and acceptance, which are key pillars of Canadian society. That is something we should be promoting. We should be looking for ways to build consensus and encourage it. Tolerance in society is of utmost importance.

I was the critic for tourism and multiculturalism in the Government of Manitoba. The Manitoba Intercultural Council wanted to address the question of how to combat racism, how to deal with some of the systemic barriers that are in place or some of the negative stereotypes that people have. From what I can recall, the number one recommendation was to do it through education, to encourage tolerance, to improve the quality of life for all Canadians.

The existing title of the legislation goes against that. This is not something new, something that has not been heard of. I suspect a good number of people would recognize why it is so important to look at ways to promote inclusion and acceptance.

While Bill S-7 was aimed at strengthening protection for women and girls, the reference to "barbaric cultural practices" in the title created those divisions. It promoted harmful stereotypes and fuelled intolerance by targeting specific communities. That is very shameful. One does not have to be a member of a targeted community to understand the harm that was being caused. What was the government of the day saying to those communities that perceive to be, and in many ways realistically are being targeted? How does the government justify the representation of those individuals?

It has often been perceived as offensive and incendiary by certain communities and stakeholder groups that serve immigrants in particular, as it targets cultural groups as a whole, rather than individuals who actually commit the specific act. This is something we are all concerned about. The types of acts that take place, I believe, are universally recognized. Members of all political parties know what is right and what is wrong, and we are not going to support in any way actions that are inappropriate.

It is important that we be very clear. Violence against women takes many different forms, and it affects millions of women across our country and around the world, regardless of religion, nationality, or culture. I recall standing up in opposition talking about that particular point. It needs to be reinforced.

Repealing the title would be a very important symbolic step, but one that would carry real meaning and consequence. We need to say that language matters.

When the former government brought forward the legislation, it did not take long for the opposition to recognize the flaw with the name. That was one of the reasons we attempted to move an amendment at committee. Unfortunately, not allowing that amendment to pass demonstrated that the Conservative government knew what it was doing at the time.

• (1850)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak about an incident that took place on November 17 on the west coast of Vancouver Island, when CTV news reported an incident that had taken place where thousands of plastic feedbags escaped from an aquaculture farm and washed ashore in the Broken Group Islands, yet the communities were not notified about this. They found out through a leak.

The company that had the spill of plastic bags had reported it to the Coast Guard in October. Its float house had gone down and the bags escaped the float house some time in early November, yet we did not learn about this until CTV reported on it. I am going to read what CTV reported. It said, "The memo says the discovery could attract 'significant' media and public attention, connecting it to broader marine debris issues such as the Hanjin shipping container spill in November 2016."

We know the efforts of the government to deal with the Hanjin were a disaster. Its plan of action was to let the local communities deal with it and then we will figure out who pays for it later and then try to reimburse them, instead of doing the right thing, which is cleaning up environmental messes and then figuring out who pays for it after, which is what people would expect.

When we learned about this through CTV, the first thing I did was reach out to the local communities, to Chief Dick at Tseshaht, to Chief Mack at Toquaht Nation, to President Les Doiron from Ucluelet First Nation, who is actually here in the House today, and the mayors of Ucluelet and Tofino. I asked if any of them had been contacted about this spill that had taken place. In fact, none of them had been contacted by the government. I will tell the House why. It is because the government was more worried about its reputation than protecting the environment, which is shameful.

The least we would expect as coastal communities is that when an incident takes place, the government contacts the local communities, the people that can help out, such as the Pacific Rim chapter of Surfrider or Clayoquot CleanUp. These groups all are willing to help out when there is an incident that takes place. They understand the significance, all of our region, all of our stakeholders, of protecting our ecosystem, especially our sensitive marine ecosystem, which we rely on for our food, for our economy, and for our recreation, and how important that is.

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Most of all, when a memo goes out like this from the minister's office in the department, it compromises local staff. The local parks staff at Pacific Rim National Park Reserve have worked very hard. They live in our communities. They work very hard to create those relationships, that trust. They care about our communities. When the government makes a decision to hide information from the local communities, it compromises the local staff who are working hard to protect our communities and make us a better region.

With tides, winds, and shifting currents, ocean plastic is constantly moving and the government obviously does not understand the sense of urgency to take care of these issues. We hope that the government will support my Motion No. 151, to have an ocean plastics strategy that will dedicate funds to combatting ocean plastic pollution, dedicated funds for cleanups and marine debris cleanups, especially when emergencies like this surface.

I hope the government will make a promise today that it will never betray coastal communities and that it will tell them the truth when an incident takes place. It is the right thing to do.

• (1855)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his focus on this issue and pay my respects to the hard work he does to make sure that the complex coastal communities of the west coast get the protection they need.

Our government also takes this issue seriously. Working together with more than 300 indigenous communities across Canada, Parks Canada and indigenous peoples are partners in conserving, restoring, and presenting Canada's natural and cultural heritage to the best of our abilities.

At Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada, the agency is working collaboratively with the Tseshaht First Nation and other Nuu-chah-nulth first nations as partners to achieve long-term conservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.

Parks Canada places represent the very best that Canada has to offer. They tell the stories of who we are, including the history, cultures, and contributions of indigenous peoples.

The Government of Canada is committed to the protection of Canada's national parks, and we take the issue of ocean debris very seriously.

When plastic bags were first discovered on the shores of the Broken Group Islands on November 10, Parks Canada immediately began working to remove the debris. At the time of the initial discovery, storm conditions prevented the agency from fully assessing the scope of the debris. Further work has continued since that time. With the help of the Canadian Coast Guard, approximately 4,000 plastic bags have been removed so far. Planning is under way to remove the remaining plastic bags and other, larger items. As weather permits, Parks Canada will continue to remove the debris from the Broken Group Islands. The agency is also planning a more formal cleanup effort in the national park reserve in collaboration with first nations, community groups, and federal departments.

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The Government of Canada appreciates the concerns of all those who reached out after learning of the debris, and extends its thanks particularly to community members and the local businesses that have offered so much support in the cleanup efforts.

The agency's law enforcement officials are also investigating the incident and will work with the federal crown prosecutor to pursue charges under the Canada National Parks Act, if appropriate.

Parks Canada is committed to open and transparent communications with indigenous partners, stakeholders, and all Canadians. The agency also has an obligation to confirm that the information it provides is clear and accurate, ensures an appropriate response, and respects investigations that are under way.

When word of the incident first spread, Parks Canada was still gathering information to provide an overview of the situation to the Tseshah First Nation, other indigenous partners, and key stakeholders along the coast. The agency has since had discussions with local first nations and local government representatives regarding the debris in the Broken Group Islands.

In the future, Parks Canada has committed to advising first nations sooner with respect to environmental incidents that occur within their traditional territory. Parks Canada will continue to share information moving forward, while respecting that an investigation is still under way.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the words from my colleague and the commitment to inform the local communities.

I have a quote about the leaked memo: "The memo also says the plastic bags could pose a threat to marine wildlife by entangling them, impacting their habitat or being ingested as food."

This is serious. The government knew that this could have an impact on the environment, yet it did not contact the local communities.

Nation to nation is built on respect. The Nuu-chah-nulth people have a word for respect. It is *isaak*. They carry *isaak* with them when they negotiate, when they talk to the government, when they look after this beautiful place that we call the Nuu-chah-nulth territories, so they expect that from the government.

I want to make sure that the member promises that they will be informed immediately, not soon but immediately, when an incident takes place on their traditional territories.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, federal departments have been working together to assess the scope of the debris in the Broken Group Islands. When Parks Canada's boats could not reach outer islands due to dangerous conditions on the water, the Canadian Coast Guard deployed a helicopter to support this important work.

Parks Canada will collaborate with Fisheries and Oceans Canada in its investigation to understand exactly what the incident was with the aquaculture operation.

We are committed to a stronger nation-to-nation relationship. We understand the importance of making sure information gets to our partners on the ground and to indigenous communities as quickly as possible to facilitate as quick a cleanup as possible.

The issues raised by the hon. member are serious, and we understand that our response has to be just as serious.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, on February 26, I posed a question to the Prime Minister on behalf of Warrant Officer Roger Perreault, a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, regarding the decision to reward terrorists who maim and kill Canadian soldiers, while denying compensation to soldiers injured in roadside bomb attacks.

Roger Perreault is an Afghanistan veteran who served his country honourably. In addition to serving in Afghanistan, he served twice in Bosnia and in three special duty areas over a span of 27 years. He was medically released from the military in 2017.

Roger was injured in 2006 in a blast from an improvised explosive device while serving in Afghanistan. He has had three back surgeries, two hip replacements, and other complications. His release was timed to take place two days before the government's fake news announcement that all support programs would be in place before an injured soldier was discharged from the military. Nothing was in place for Roger and his family.

Now released from the military, retired Perreault is being denied the critical injury benefit by Veterans Affairs, being told that, at age 46, his injuries are the result of his body wearing out, ignoring the injuries he received in the IED blast. Today, veteran Roger Perreault informs me that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not even bother to return his phone calls. The Prime Minister should be ashamed that a Canadian veteran who sacrificed his health and the well-being of his family is treated in such a shoddy fashion.

On the evening of October 7, 2006, while on mission in Afghanistan, Warrant Officer Perreault was on a routine patrol in a LAV III. He had stopped behind another LAV III and dismounted when a large explosion ripped the left side of the LAV, throwing him to the ground. While, at the time, Roger considered himself lucky to have survived the explosion, several of his close comrades in arms were not so lucky.

Trooper Mark Andrew Wilson of the Royal Canadian Dragoons died that day. On September 3, 2006, Sargent Shane Hank Stachnik, from Roger's 2 Combat Engineer Regiment, Warrant Officer Richard Francis Nolan and Warrant Officer Frank Robert Mellish of the Royal Canadian Regiment died during a Taliban assault. Roger is haunted by memories of those fallen comrades. Now, considering the treatment he is receiving from his own government, he is not so sure who was the lucky one.

Four weeks ago, a veteran in Edmonton said, "I was prepared to be killed in action. What I wasn't prepared for, Mr. Prime Minister, is Canada turning its back on me." The Prime Minister's response that veterans are asking for more than he can give them right now was appalling.

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Actually, what veterans are asking for is what the Prime Minister promised them. In terms of pain, suffering, and incapacity payments, most if not all veterans who qualify for such benefits under the Liberal April 2019 plan will receive less than under programs that were available from the Conservative government. What a cruel trick to Veterans: announce a program that few if any veterans qualify for.

Additional existing and future benefits have highly restrictive criteria. Only 152 veterans received the critical injury benefit that is owed to Roger Perreault out of more than 62,000 recipients of the lump sum. The Liberals have made it so difficult to qualify for the critical injury benefit that by their own estimates only six veterans per year will qualify going forward.

● (1900)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces literally put their lives on the line in service of our country, and for us.

On November 4, 2015, this government pledged to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces members injured in the line of duty receive the care, support, respect, and economic opportunities they deserve. We are delivering on that promise by enhancing programs for veterans with service-related injuries and illnesses, as well as improving service delivery. Plus, we are restoring a pension for life option.

On April 1 of this year, new programs that we announced in budget 2017 will become available to our veterans and their families. These include career transition services; the caregiver recognition benefit of \$1,000 per month, tax free; expanded access to military family resource centres for veterans and their families; a new veteran emergency fund; a veteran and family well-being fund; and a new centre of excellence on PTSD and related mental health conditions. We are also expanding financial support for post-secondary education and training for veterans after service and removing the time limits for vocational training and support for families.

We announced a pension for life option for Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans with service-related disabilities. It means that a 25-year-old retired corporal who is 100% disabled would receive more than \$5,800 in monthly support. For a 50-year-old retired major who is 100% disabled, monthly support would be almost \$9,000. With an emphasis on overall well-being, we have invested over \$6 billion to improve benefits and services for veterans, and the new pension for life plan invests nearly \$3.6 billion more in pension benefits and programs that can be tailored to meet the individual needs of veterans and their families.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

We know that veterans are often frustrated over having to wait to receive the benefits to which they are entitled after applying. Although the number of applications for disability benefits has increased by 32% over the past two years, this is a good thing. We are implementing programs and benefits for veterans, and more veterans are asking for the help they need and deserve.

We realize that there is still much work to be done. The Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada are working together to fill the gaps between the two departments so that veterans no longer have to wait to receive benefits. We promised to improve how our brave veterans and their families are treated. We will keep our promise.

[*English*]

It was clear the new veterans charter did not meet the financial needs of our veterans and their families. We listened to them. We increased the disability award, the earnings loss benefit, and introduced the pension for life to address this. In the first two years of our mandate, we invested almost \$10 billion to improve the services and benefits available.

I have personally visited 12 bases and wings in the past year, including CFB Petawawa, and spoke to military families.

We have introduced the caregiver benefit of \$1,000 tax free per month, which will be coming into effect April 1 of this year; \$147 million over the next six years for access to the MFRCs, all 32 of them across Canada, for veterans and their families; and just yesterday, we announced in budget 2018, an additional \$42.8 million over the next two years to improve service delivery, because we know we need to get faster supports to our veterans, including \$24.4 million for graves and commemoration. We also will introduce the tax benefit for veterans for service dogs.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, recently Conservatives in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke overwhelmingly endorsed me to represent our party in the next federal election. It looks like the Prime Minister's party will be looking for a new candidate after he recently said the following on social media.

“Three years ago, I decided to seek the Liberal nomination for the candidacy in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. My only political goal was to play a role in assuring that no other brave Canadian soldier would be penalized at home due to their service. I was inspired by [the Prime Minister's] promises to fix things. I was inspired by the presence of other veterans lining up to win nominations for the Liberals. I legitimately felt hopeful for the first time in a long time. I believed them. Now I realize that I was wrong.

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“The Prime Minister recently stated that Canadian veterans want more than Canada can give. I stood on a stage behind [the Prime Minister] in August of 2015 when he made a promise to veterans, a promise which was obviously, in retrospect, a political bargaining chip. I have first-hand experience as a service member, stakeholder, and party member with respect to the way our military is regarded—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, time is up.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I stood in the House two weeks ago and I put out a call to my colleagues across this great institution to stop playing politics on the backs of military, veterans, and their families. I will not play politics with them.

We made a promise to do right by our brave men and women in uniform and the families that supported them. In the two years we have been in office, we have clearly demonstrated we mean it. We are putting the money where our mouths are. We are delivering on that promise to support our veterans and their families by introducing a pension for life and improving services and delivery.

We will continue to put veterans first because that is what they need.

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, on November 2 last year, I asked a question about the housing situation in Canada. A few days later, the government finally announced a few details on its national housing strategy. Yesterday, it tabled its third budget, which I must say left much to be desired on a number of fronts.

According to the last census, nearly one in five Canadians cannot find affordable housing and is forced to spend more than 30% of their income on housing. One of the least expensive ways to address this affordable housing crisis is to invest in social housing in order to prevent further homelessness. However, as I mentioned in my original question, more than 25,000 families in Montreal are on the waiting list for social housing. In Toronto, 58,000 community housing units are in need of immediate repair.

The longer we wait, the more habitable social and community housing we lose, and the worse the situation gets for vulnerable families stuck on waiting lists. After announcing its housing strategy, the government should have used budget 2018 as an opportunity to show that it is serious about tackling the housing crisis. However, like us, the municipalities of Canada and Quebec, which too often suffer the repercussions of the housing crisis, denounced this missed opportunity to support social housing.

In response to budget 2018, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which had been calling on the government to expedite the funding it had announced in 2017 for housing repairs, issued a statement that said:

After years of chronic underfunding for repairs, this move would have enabled housing providers to keep at-risk homes safe and open for vulnerable families. But instead of protecting this vital part of Canada's social housing supply, this budget delays funding for critical repairs that are ready to go ahead.

The mayor of Montreal, Valérie Plante, echoed those remarks:

The mayors of major Canadian cities had specifically asked the government to expedite funding for the renovation of the existing housing stock...and, unfortunately, it is not in this budget.

As I said earlier, the budget left much to be desired. By refusing to act now to prevent and address problems, the government is in denial about the depth of the housing crisis in too many Canadian communities. It is all well and good to give a little bit of money for the construction of new affordable housing units, but if we do nothing to stop losing units, we are not any further ahead. When we take a few steps forward in one area and a few steps backwards in another, we are not moving forward.

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association also commented on yesterday's budget:

● (1910)

[English]

In response to today's federal Budget, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) today lamented the lack of a dedicated funding stream for the housing challenges facing Indigenous peoples living in urban and rural settings. Furthermore, although CHRA continues to applaud the release of the National Housing Strategy by the Prime Minister in November 2017, CHRA had hoped that Budget 2018 would provide new information regarding the status and implementation of the programs announced as part of the National Housing Strategy.

[Translation]

These reactions point to the fact that this budget is a missed opportunity to address the housing crisis right now. I will ask my question again.

Given that 90% of the amounts announced in budget 2017 for the next 10 years will be invested starting only in 2019 and that very few investments were announced in the budget tabled yesterday, why is the government not committing to immediately investing the necessary funds to maintain and expand the social housing stock?

● (1915)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no government in the history of this country has invested more in housing than this government. The national housing strategy, which was launched in November, which was promised in last year's budget, will produce \$40 billion in spending over the next 10 years.

I know there is a concern that there is no money coming this year, but that is just not true. In our first budget, we quadrupled the transfers to the provinces. In fact, we did it in such a way, and made eligible repairs, that close to 100,000 homes across the country have already been touched by those investments in housing, which were spent in the first year of our mandate and in the second year of our mandate, and are being spent right now.

Adjournment Proceedings

Yesterday I heard the leader of the third party talk about how there was no housing money being spent for the next two years. Again, that is absolutely wrong. In fact, the national housing strategy, with a \$5-billion commitment over the next 10 years, is being spent this year, starting in April, and those dollars are specifically targeted for capital investments, which include repairs.

The reality is this. We have doubled the spending on homelessness. That happened in our first budget and is now being locked in for the next 10 years. We have quadrupled the money being transferred to the provinces. We are about to embark on the Canada housing benefit, which is going to deliver subsidies to families and is going to have a substantial impact on the number of people who receive housing in the next 10 years.

The government started spending the day it took office. It has increased that spending this budget. It has added a further \$1.25 billion to spur the construction of affordable and below-market affordable rental housing in major cities that are experiencing a housing crisis. There is no part of the housing spectrum, from homelessness to supportive housing to social housing to co-operative housing to low-rent and private support for new rental housing to low-income home ownership, that is not touched by the \$40-billion housing strategy.

To contrast this with the party opposite, it promised to spend \$6 billion over four years, not \$40 billion over 10. Our approach is not only more aggressive, it is delivered sooner. In fact, we will spend more on housing in the last two years of our mandate than the Conservatives proposed to spend in their entire mandate if they had been elected.

Our program is not timid. It is aggressive. It is progressive, it is imaginative, and it is supported by virtually every single city across this country. In fact, what the mayors asked was that we accelerate the extraordinary investment so that they could get to repairs sooner. The national housing strategy actually allows them to borrow the 10 years of money up front and fit it into their capital programs so they can spend it this year and use it in an imaginative way, with different financing, to get the results they want sooner.

This housing policy has been built with cities for cities, and most importantly, by cities. Our work with the FCM has been phenomenal.

I will address the issue of indigenous housing after the second question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Madam Speaker, the government keeps trying to wage a battle of principles and imaginary numbers,

like when it announced last November, as it did just now, that \$40 billion would be invested in housing over the next 10 years, but failed to mention that three-quarters of the money would come from the private sector and the provinces, with whom no agreement has been concluded.

Last year, the government announced an \$11-billion budget over 11 years, but as stated in the budget, 90% of the money will not be available until 2019, which, by the way, will be the Liberal government's electoral budget. The thing is, the money is needed right now. Stakeholders and municipalities, as I just said, are calling on the government to invest last year's building renovation funding more quickly.

I will repeat my question: why is the government not immediately investing the necessary funding to preserve and expand social housing?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, as I said, we are investing now. We are investing immediately. That money is eligible to be spent on repairs or on new builds or on subsidies. We are leaving it to local housing providers to make the best choice based on the housing stock they are managing.

On the issue of indigenous urban housing, last year's budget had a commitment of \$225 million as a down payment on a national urban indigenous housing strategy. Those dollars start flowing this year.

Every single thing being spent this year is not in this year's budget; it is in previous years' budgets. I can assure members that it is not imaginary. I have been putting shovels in the ground from coast to coast to coast, cutting ribbons from coast to coast to coast, and taking a look at the new dollars that are arriving in real people's houses, in real time, as we speak.

The investments we made in 2016, the investments we made in 2017, are on the ground building housing, repairing housing, and, most importantly, housing people in this country. We are not done yet. We added almost \$3 billion in yesterday's budget.

We are committed to housing. We will deliver on housing. We will deliver real dollars—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)

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